The Faith of a Middle-Aged Man

Henry Kingman

THE FAITH OF A MIDDLE-AGED MAN

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A LITTLE BOOK OF REASSURANCE
FOR TROUBLED TIMES

BY

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TO MY FRIEND

Shailer Mathews

PREFACE

THIS is not a book primarily for scholars or for students of theology, but for plain people—the men and women whom we are meeting daily in our homes and on the streets, preoccupied with innumerable cares. There may chance to be scholars and theologians among them; but, if so, their interest in these chapters will come not from their wisdom but from the elemental heart-hunger that is common to us all, the hunger after a life made satisfying by its hold on God. So it is not a book on theology but on successful living. Not by one who has succeeded, but by one who has been much helped by Him who did succeed and is still bringing wavering followers to a triumphant issue in the face of heavy odds.

HENRY KINGMAN.

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CONTENTS

Part I

THE GROUND OF FAITH

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Life's Need of Faith . . .	3
II	The Appeal of Middle Age .	8
III	The Years of Attrition . .	18
IV	Faith's Inner Citadel . . .	30
V	The Life as a Witness to the Truth	44
VI	The Personality of Jesus . .	62
VII	The Witness of the Life-Stream	74
VIII	The Place of the Cross . .	94

Part II

THE OUTLOOK OF FAITH

IX	The Fact of God	117
X	The Divine Outlook on Man .	138
XI	The Good Fight	160
XII	The Discipline of Pain . . .	186
XIII	Overcoming Under Difficulties	203
XIV	The Hope of Everlasting Life	225
XV	The Unending Fellowship . .	235

Part I

THE GROUND OF FAITH

THE FAITH OF A MIDDLE-AGED MAN

CHAPTER I

Life's Need of Faith

THERE is no doubt that the characteristic note of our day is not faith but criticism. Yet it is equally certain that there have been few generations so weary at last of the temper that doubteth all things, and so eager for faith if one but knew where to find it. For, after all, a man's faith in God is his most precious possession, for the simple reason that, as a man of great spiritual discernment said long ago, "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." In persistently fair weather he may not realize how priceless its assistance is; but at a time like this, when the whole world is forced to grope anew for the soul's adequate reassurance in the presence of immeasurable disaster, it is the one unchoked fountain of comfort and courage. It is hard to see how a nation or a man can live nobly without it.

For most of us this needs no argument.

Our own experience has forced us to this conclusion. Life, we have been told, is an affair of honor. And so indeed we have found it. It is a trust involving heavy risks. We take it up light-heartedly at first, but as years go by and disillusionments set in we begin to see what manner of enterprise it is we are engaged in, and our attitude toward it grows less confident. We may grow out of humor with it, or dwell reproachfully on the way in which it has failed to keep its early promises; we may lose heart under its burden or sit cowed beneath its blows of evil fortune; we may come to abuse it, or treat it with cynical contempt, or even refuse it altogether. But to go on and on, in spite of all, morning and afternoon and evening, faithfully meeting the call of each new day until, in Stevenson's phrase, we have "got cleanly off the stage," this is indeed an engagement of honor that some of us are hard pressed to keep. We need in it not only all our own inward resources of strength, but every help of faith that eager hearts in days gone by have ever found.

For, as in every affair of honor, there is only one possible course that an honest man can follow; and that is the way of unhesitating fidelity. Anything less than this is unthinkable. No refusal or evasion or compromise, nor any sort of faltering or rec-

reancy, is so much as to be considered. As Louis Pasteur said, simply, when his friend Deville spoke of the danger of his proposed studies of cholera in the South, "What about duty?" That is the last word for men of honest purpose, even though it be a hard one. If courage is demanded, then courage must somehow be found, and resiliency enough to meet every rebuff and partial overthrow. It is by no means enough to win through life with a kind of stoical doggedness — a dour persistency that refuses to be dislodged from the way of duty even though the days are gray with doubt and the future holds no hope of better things. It is possible to go on grimly with the fight in a spirit of prevailing despondency and pessimism. But so long as the world has vividly before it the memory of Jesus, and of his irrepressible confidence and hopefulness through days of evil fortune, and so long as it has with it in every generation his followers, of a like spirit of indomitable good cheer, it will refuse to take the mere acceptance of the inevitable as an adequate discharge of life's obligation. There must be a better success than this. It is victory that men want — the victory of a self-possession undaunted and expectant in the face of every problem and disappointment that the world can yield.

On every side of us, in numbers past counting, are the men and women who have felt the truth of these things and who are fighting the long, arduous fight of life. They have come to the point where the freshness of early hopes is gone and where the tide runs swiftest against them, where cares and fears multiply as life's resources dwindle. They look about them wistfully for help — fresh help for needs more insistent and perplexities more insidious than of old. Where is one to look in this critical doubting age for any adequate reassurance or promise of victory? Our answer is based not only on the accumulated experience of thoughtful men for ages past, but, what is even more convincing, upon our own experience through these latest years that belong to us. Our only chance of winning through successfully is by the way that Jesus found sufficient, so long ago — the way of faith in God. His faith, his teaching and his spirit still afford the only way to such an undiscourageable optimism as was his. As was said of certain poor folk long before the day of Jesus' testing, "They looked unto him and were radiant, and their faces were not ashamed." It is the sight of God that still illumines life's dark places, and gives courage for energetic service. The misgivings and questionings of a critical age, no less than the slings and arrows of

outrageous fortune, may be met in quiet peace if only one believes that Jesus Christ was sent of God that we might know the truth.

The creeds and institutions in which the church has embodied its faith are very old; they bear the marks of centuries of discussion and elaboration, and many in our day tend to shrink away from them just because of their venerable complexity. But faith itself is young and simple and more deeply intrenched in human experience than it has ever been. And it is this fresh living faith, new-born out of the needs and aspirations of our own generation, that will lead us through the entanglements of our sophisticated age, clear through, to the day when some may even hope to hear the words, "Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."

CHAPTER II

The Appeal of Middle Age

WHAT has middle age to do with the fight for faith? Is there anything about this period of life that entitles it to be heard for itself, as though it had a spiritual experience peculiarly its own? Is its faith in any wise different from that of youth or old age, so that it has a message of special savor and pertinence for those who have reached the early afternoon of the long day of work? It is only necessary to ask the question in this form for the answer to suggest itself. Just because it is the time in life when work bears heaviest, when the freshness of morning has gone and the rest of evening is not in sight, middle age has its own temptations and its own triumphs, out of which there may well come a message, to be won out of no other conditions, timely and heartening for those whose sense of need deepens with each year.

As for old age, it seems as a rule to have come out into quieter waters than those with which most of us are familiar, as though the middle passage were over and one had come again under the lee of the land — the land of the other shore. Assuredly old age

has its consolations, even though we feel the pathos of its infirmities and its frequent loneliness. Not only so, but it has almost a literature of its own, from the days of Cicero down. Many have spoken for its encouragement, and not a few have voiced its triumphs and its visions, since the time of John the Aged.

As for early manhood, never has it been so true as today that "youth will be served." Much of the best of our religious literature is written for the special needs of college men and women, or for those at least who are still in the student period, when they are facing for the first time the critical problems so characteristic of our day. There is no audience so attractive as is this. Thoughtful, eager, responsive, it demands the very best that our generation can afford; and it is no wonder that the ablest writers and thinkers of our time are being largely drawn upon to meet the needs of this plastic and appealing body of hearers. There is no doubt that the needs and aspirations of life at the spring, when it is fresh and hopeful and full of vigor and determination, will always command the first place in our attention. Always it will have abundance of spokesmen and interpreters, of teachers and helpers and champions, by virtue of its unfailing and irresistible appeal.

But middle age! Is it not something like that unattractive desert of boyhood between the ages of ten and fifteen years, when the early attractiveness has faded out and the maturer dignities of young manhood have not appeared? Men and women of fifty are not supposed to have much to say about the doubts and temptations of which they spoke so freely, and to sympathetic listeners, thirty years before. Indeed, if they spoke of them, they would be hard put to find an audience. They are supposed to have come through the period of storm and stress long ago, and to be engrossed now with their work. They are interesting only as they are earning money, or managing affairs, or caring for their households. It is taken for granted that they are practical men and women, too busy with the serious concerns of life to have either taste or leisure for indulging in the spiritual misgivings or the anxious heart-searchings that seem natural enough for the young girl or the lad standing at life's threshold.

Alas for us who have reached or passed the halfway mark on life's journey! We are supposed to be too sensible and too strong to have much need of counsel, still less of help or comfort. We are the helpers of others. That we should still be having a struggle for our own soul's life, that we should still be

panting for a freer air in which we may breathe more joyously, seems a trifle absurd. It is not to be expected. In any case middle age is not interesting to others. We are too old — or else not old enough. We are out in the hard glare of early afternoon, when the realities of things as they are stand out with merciless distinctness. The long shadows of the morning, or the veiling indistinctness of approaching dusk, are quite wanting. That we, too, should be living in the half-lights, wistfully anxious for clearer vision, full of hopes and fears we dare not utter but which are more pathetically eager than when we were young and strong, that temptations bafflingly new and unexpected should be assailing us, or that we, at middle age, whom our boys and girls think to be so stodgily going on our old-fashioned way of stiffened habits and beliefs, are still fighting the old battle for an honest and courageous day's living and for faith enough to keep on cheerily from one day's sunset to the next — who would suspect this to be true? Who but a middle-aged man or woman, who knows that it is so, who is living in the very heart of such a fight, and who finds that maturity does not necessarily mean security any more than silence signifies satisfaction?

If we are silent about our doubts it is because it gives us pain to think of them,

rather than a certain complacency that we once felt, so long ago, when it was an agreeable exercise to discuss the great problems of life and death. If it is not agreeable now, perhaps it is because our happiness is too vitally concerned. Faith is more precious than it was in the days when it did not have to be hardly earned. To be sure, we are more hard-headed and less sentimental than once we were. We are expected to take our disillusionments with the satisfaction that comes with widening knowledge. But it is not all gain, especially if we fear that even the vision splendid begins "to die away, and fade into the light of common day."

One is reminded of that pathetic verse of Thomas Hood's, that must have had a secret stab for innumerable hearts of whom it would never have been suspected:

> I remember, I remember
> The fir-trees dark and high;
> I used to think their slender tops
> Were close against the sky.
> It was a childish ignorance,
> But now 'tis little joy
> To know I'm farther off from heaven
> Than when I was a boy.

Thirty years of competitive struggle with a selfish world of men, half a lifetime of getting and spending, soon and late, in order to keep up appearances, do not tend of them-

selves to bring heaven nearer, or to make faith shine more brightly than when we were young. And to most men it is no joy to feel that spiritual realities are growing dim, or to realize, as did Darwin, that some of the nobler capacities of the soul are growing dull and unresponsive through the mere attrition of absorbing work.

Depend upon it, middle age has also its trial of storm and stress to struggle through, as surely as the passionate years of stormy youth. And such faith as it holds or wins is the more significant and very precious. It may well make special claim for a thoughtful hearing and consideration. Whatever limitations it may have, it has at least the quality of reality. It is no longer the faith of inheritance, or of early education, or of inexperience. It is not based upon any external authority, but upon experience of life and its discipline, and of God and his mercies. It has been won out of conflict, in the face of a legion of hostile circumstances, within and without. Probably it is not as complete and symmetrical as the faith we had in earlier years, but it has been tested at all points and has been found to bear the strain of life. We can rest upon it even in the dark and cloudy day, not because others have told us that it is good, but because we have wrestled for it through many days and

nights of need, and God has actually come near us through its aid.

It should be clearly understood that in speaking of the faith of middle age we do not mean theological faith alone — the articles of a man's creed — though doubtless these are at the heart of any hopeful outlook upon life. We are speaking of something broader and more inclusive than that, something even more precious and divine. We mean the whole attitude of the soul toward God and his world, that is like that of Jesus in its calm trust in the goodness and power of the Almighty. Faith is the opposite of fear. It stands for an undiscourageable optimism in the face of a world that is full of inexplicable pain and evil. It means the unshakable assurance that God is good, that his thoughts and plans for men are those of love, and that his resources of power and grace are such as will ultimately bring these plans to pass in spite of all our ignorance and infirmity. Fear means doubt and uncertainty and pessimism; it paralyzes the very springs of life. Faith is inseparable from joy and expectancy and service, and knits up our flagging resolution to ever new effort and determination.

So then, the faith of a middle-aged man, built up slowly out of years of baffling experience, of innumerable perplexities and

disappointments, is something deeper and more significant than the mere acceptance of certain great doctrines regarding God and the soul. It is the victory of the spirit over the whole blighting power of doubt. It is the triumph of a child of God over all those insidious enemies who would persuade him that he is not a child of God at all, and that the warring world of men, of which for a brief moment he is a part, is not and never can be a kingdom of divine love. It is a wonderful thing to come through all the warping strains of life among men with an unquenchable confidence that God is present in his world and at our side, and that his righteousness and love are the invincible powers that lie behind all the seething chaos of human weakness and social wrong. It does not imply a confidence in one's own future only, but in that of the far-stretching Kingdom of God. And on the other hand it is not a trust in the final victory of that Kingdom alone, but in the joyful outcome of our own brief life-career, as of infinite worth to the Father of the household.

There are not many of us who do not feel, at some time in the long years, the deadly influence of the cynical skepticism that is ever about us like an atmosphere, in literature and in society. There is too often a half-stifled echo in our own hearts to those

mocking words that have come down through the centuries:

> We are no other than a moving row
> Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go
> Round with this Sun-illumin'd lantern, held
> In Midnight by the Master of the show.
>
> And that inverted bowl they call the Sky,
> Whereunder, crawling, coop'd, we live and die,
> Lift not your hands to It for help — for It
> As impotently rolls as you or I.

It only needs an overwhelming experience of sorrow in our own lives, some sudden and unexpected reversal of the tide of prosperity that we had come to take for granted, for these challenging denials — so powerless to disturb us when the sun shines brightly — to become a cruel menace to our peace.

Faith is the victory even over these. It is the characteristic of middle age to have passed in and out of the shadow perhaps once and again; to have confronted these assailing fears in times of depression or weakness when they were at their worst, and even so, in spite of all, to have found the simple faith of Jesus as a rock beneath the feet, on which there was sure standing when many things seemed likely to be swept away. The faith of middle life means the victory of the soul over all such powers of fear and death as lurk in doubts like these. Not complete victory as yet — there may still be quite unsuspected

dangers to be passed through — but at the flood-tide of life's cares, when the world presses in relentlessly day by day, it means the peace of the disciple of Jesus, sharing with his great Elder Brother the assurance of a Father's love.

CHAPTER III

The Years of Attrition

ONE of the cleverest essays that have appeared in recent years is that by Samuel Crothers on the "School for Polite Unlearning." It genially depicts the school whose aim — in view of certain regrettable qualities in modern education — is not to add to the store of its pupils' mental possessions, but to disburden them of a store of laboriously acquired information and relieve them early of the useless excess of opinions and beliefs that cannot hope to withstand the test of time. We are all familiar with the numberless institutions, great and small, whose laudable purpose is to store the minds of the rising generation with facts of every kind. But surely there is need, here and there, after years of hasty and careless stuffing with the ideas of many men, of a sort of post-graduate course that shall gently relieve us of all our fancied knowledge of the things that are not so — of all our blunders and prejudices and misconceptions, all our incredulities and assumptions, that would impair our judgment and lessen our influence through life.

This "School for Polite Unlearning" is a

parable of the period of these last forty years, through which we of middle age have been passing. If ever unwilling students were forced to enter on an apparently unending course of instruction in the art of unlearning, even of beliefs and acquisitions most highly prized, it has been in the case of the men and women of today who came from the typical homes of a generation now past; not those most cultured or most highly intellectual, but the ordinary God-fearing homes of the common people, where religion was honestly regarded as the most vital concern in life. Such homes were in those days even less likely than now to be in sympathetic touch with the latest phases of religious thought in the world at large, yet they were and are the bulwarks of what is best and strongest in our Christian civilization. You will still find them by the tens of thousands, especially through the South and West, almost untouched in their religious thinking by the modern point of view. Their sons and daughters are in the universities, adjusting themselves to the intellectual movements of the day, but the parents are still living in a world of ideas to which those who have once tasted of modern scholarship never can return. Here is the pathetic tragedy that is still going on in homes rich and poor all about us, as all are aware who

know at first hand what the lives of the people are.

But the young people today are none of them wholly unprepared, on leaving home, to meet the modern point of view. It is in the atmosphere we breathe today, even for children; and they are somehow forewarned of what awaits them and are prepared to make the intellectual transition with a minimum of mental disturbance. In most cases they even seem to take it for granted that their home training was out of date, and as a matter of course is to be superseded by the more scientific attitude of the educated man.

Not so was it when we were young. For hundreds of years our forbears, in all their religious thinking, had rested unhesitatingly upon certain religious principles which for them had never been seriously contested, save by those who were more or less open enemies of the faith. They had not even a mind to inquire whether these inherited assumptions should be challenged. There was something irreverent and perilous about giving any entertainment to serious questioning of traditional views, which bore for them the sacredness of the inspired word on whose teachings they were thought to be founded.

Most clearly was this so in the case of the

Bible itself, and that which pertained to it. So long had men been used, for example, to look at the date 4004 B.C. as the year of the creation of the world, that it did not even occur to them to be restive under that singular assertion. The use of proof texts, chosen at random from any section of the Bible as conclusive for the settlement of moral and spiritual problems, was so habitual, so venerable in its historical indorsement, that it seemed to place beyond argument the equal authority of every writing within the Canon. To admit a human element in any portion of the long record, or to suggest, for example, that certain arguments of Paul's owed their curious inconclusiveness for modern minds to his rabbinic training, was to be guilty of a kind of unbelief that was both audacious and sinful.

It is of course true that in scholarly circles the writings of Kant and Schleiermacher and their successors had long before that day invaded and partially overthrown the theological preconceptions that underlay much of the doctrinal teaching of the church. Yet there were few of us who did not start out with the idea that correct belief was the primary requisite for salvation as for church membership. Men in those days could still hear without protest the amazing words, made authoritative by many centuries of

unchallenged use, " Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith . . . . Which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." One does not even like to remember what views were commonly held as to what our Father proposed to do hereafter with all his distressed and scattered children in the wide world everywhere, who had never had the good fortune of hearing the true faith set forth. The religious atmosphere of the orthodox homes of our childhood was, on its intellectual side — for divine love had often made their sympathies outrun their creeds — still that of the Middle Ages. Possibly it even prided itself that it had not advanced beyond Luther or Calvin or Jonathan Edwards.

Our modern-minded children find it hard to sympathize with us who have been compelled in our brief lifetime to bridge over a change of mental attitude toward religious truth that historically is only to be bridged by centuries. The intellectual world had long been preparing for it, as thoughtful men gradually broke away from the rigid scholasticism of an earlier age, but upon us who are the middle-aged men and women in the churches of today the successive demands for the relinquishment of old convictions,

and readjustment to wholly new conceptions, have been breaking like the waves of a fast-rising sea, until it is no wonder that the faith of some has been submerged altogether under a rising tide of doubt.

It is not as though we had been compelled simply to unlearn certain things that no longer can be held as true. The change has been more subtle and more significant than this. No thoughtful man fears the influence upon faith of what he is convinced is truth. It is not as between black and white, true and false, that we have difficulty in choosing. But the popularity of agnosticism as a creed, the ease of saying "I do not know" to all the age-old human hopes that lie beyond the ordinary methods of scientific research and that transcend our common experience, has led many to feel that convictions are no longer to be expected on certain matters of profound spiritual concern. It does not matter that Jesus spoke regarding them with a sublime assurance. The influence of Jesus' words has temporarily been clouded by the obvious fact that science cannot confirm their truth, and by the assumption that, as science has no clear deliverance to offer, it is necessary for cautious thinkers to hold them as unproved.

Of course there is a manifest seduction in this attitude for every lazy or indifferent

mind, and for every one who would welcome an excuse for doubt on realities that would press in with inconvenient urgency upon his soul. There is nothing that is at once so easy and so respectable as to affirm a regretful ignorance regarding any of the great problems of human responsibility and divine love. It does not seem active disbelief, which might be reprehensible, but merely a state of intellectual suspension — the refusal to affirm. Yet it is sufficient to involve all the great realities of life and death in a nebula of uncertainty that leaves them powerless to control.

There are none of us who have not felt the chilling influence of this omnipresent attitude of doubt — the willingness to leave undetermined and unanswered the supreme questions that Jesus set himself to answer, in words and deeds of comfort that his gospel has continued to repeat, for the joy and inspiration of humanity, through eighteen hundred years. The modern spirit urges us, if not to unlearn them, at least to hold them as beyond the reach of proof and therefore unessential for human living.

We cannot be too often reminded, moreover, that from within the church itself come indirect support and excuse for such an attitude of non-conviction as to truths that once were held as the dearest possessions

of the soul. The prevailing note in the religious experience of our times is, of course, its reawakening to the social consciousness — its profound recognition of the sociological bearings of the Christian gospel. Christian men today are deeply preoccupied with this social message that for so long a time has been obscured to our inestimable loss. The church is busy everywhere with the thoughts and plans and activities to which this awakening has given rise. Its insistence now is not upon belief, but upon action. And just because of its preoccupation with obligations and duties too long neglected, it is contented to relegate to one side, for the time being, certain momentous matters of faith that are in fact the very foundation of the new social structure it would build. It is not preaching about them because it is not thinking about them. It is preaching and thinking about their social implications. It does not mean to disregard them, still less to deny them, but for a time they have been crowded out of sight, and it is easy for many to hold a non-committal attitude regarding them, as though in a stirring age like this they were not of practical importance. Our fathers put them first — by an immeasurable precedence. But we have come, not to deny that they are first, but to lose any clear sight of them and any ardent loyalty in their

support, simply because we are so busy gathering the harvest that they alone make possible.

Nor is it the attrition of new ideas alone under which the sharply defined beliefs of our early years have lost something of their satisfying clearness. The very experience of life itself has been disconcerting to the simple philosophy of Christian character with which we started out. Our very acquaintance with men — our knowledge of human nature — has softened, as with charity and humility, our easy classification of mankind into the saved and unsaved, according as they accepted or not the historic doctrines concerning Jesus Christ. We were taught to believe — at least we did believe — that if a man were a professing Christian, firmly holding to the doctrines of the true faith, he was thereby evidenced to be a child of God. But as years went by, and we came to know men and women of many different types of thought and training, painful and multiplied perplexities arose, especially as we considered the meaning of the words "By their fruits ye shall know them."

We found that the most strenuous orthodoxy sometimes coexisted with harsh and bitter tempers, and even with business habits that were mean or habitually untrustworthy. While again, those who seemed to have no

clear hold on the great doctrines that have redeemed the world, and who even made no profession of Christian faith, showed forth in their humble self-forgetting love of God and man the very temper of the children of the household. Again and again have we watched with something like dismay the collapse into moral ruin of one who has held a position of leadership in the church, while maintaining secretly for years a life of conscious duplicity; and on the other hand, how often has our complacency been rebuked by finding the divinely nurtured flowers of faithfulness to duty and trust amid the darkness, in those whose very want of illumination would once have seemed to us a mark of guilt that shut them out from God. The elaborate discriminations of earlier church teaching have somehow grown to seem artificial and unconvincing by the side of the simple statement of the apostle John, " He that loveth is born of God and knoweth him."

It is painful to reflect that the troubles of life have also had their part in wearing away the very faith by which trouble may be overcome. With some of us, the jarring, numbing effect of sorrow has had its part in breaking down all easy, untested confidence in the love of God. Pain of body or mind, or the mere heart-ache of loneliness, can make the world a lonely place indeed by removing

God's face far away. The sense of unfairness, of unmerited defeat or wrong, withers away for some the quiet trust they once thought their secure possession. And what shall we say of the inundation of fears and griefs that has beset so many in these days of the Great War, with its devastation of countless lives and homes? Life in its later stages brings unexpected strains and wrenches even to mature experience, leading men and women to relinquish as unproven or ill-founded hopes that earlier seemed a sure source of consolation.

All these give but a suggestion of the never-ending stream of influences that has been at work upon us through the decades, remolding our very habits of thought and always moving us a little farther off from the calmly accepted tradition of the past in which our fathers seemed to rest so contentedly, once they had settled for themselves the primary question of their personal submission to God's will. We have reached the point where the very honesty of our purpose and the reality of our search for truth seem to lead us, not to a contented acquiescence in the venerable " deposit of faith " that has come down to us through the centuries, but to a torturing uncertainty as to how much we may — not must — believe. We have unlearned so much, under a compulsion beyond

all possibility of resistance in spite of years of inward protest, that the whole structure of our faith seems shaken, and we sometimes wonder whether, if so much has gone, there is any adequate security for the permanence of what remains. The process of change has been no welcome unloading of inconvenient or unpopular opinions, but a sore travail of spirit, as we sought on the one hand to keep faith with God who bids us to be honest above all, and yet to keep firm hold on that sublime trust in the gospel of his love that carried our parents fearlessly through their long day of testing to a triumphant end. But to the upright there ariseth light in the darkness.

CHAPTER IV

Faith's Inner Citadel

IN the siege of Delhi, during the Sepoy rebellion, when the British troops were perched on the ridge outside the city through the long heart-breaking summer, the chief fear of those who knew the situation best was that the Sepoys would throw up a secondary line of earthworks behind the exposed wall, so that when at last the wall was breached and the storming party entered, they would merely find themselves confronted by a second fortification, stronger than the first, the city still lying impregnable within. The fear was not realized; but times without number, from the siege of Jerusalem down, this is the surprise that has awaited the triumphant besiegers in what they thought to be their hour of victory — to find an inner circle of defense, still secure from their attack.

Something similar to this has been taking place in our own generation, in the long series of assaults upon the Christian faith. The old defenses have slowly been giving way. They were ill adapted to withstand the methods of present-day warfare, and at last, to the consternation of the defenders,

it has become only too evident that breaches have here and there been made that seem to imperil the whole position. But other forces have been at work than those that have engaged public attention. For now, at length, it begins to be apparent that while the time-honored walls of authoritative creed and confession and dogma, laid stone by stone so painstakingly through centuries of earnest effort, have been giving way year by year, until eager voices proclaim that they and all they sheltered are at last in ruins, an inner circle of defense meantime has been growing up, impregnable even before twentieth-century ingenuity of assault, sheltering still within it the gospel of God, without which the hope of the world were dead.

It is not based upon any external authority, however venerable, but upon the living experience of God's voice in the soul, not to be resisted save by doing violence to the laws of the spirit. It centers about the revelation of Jesus Christ. Not primarily because any book proclaims him divine, nor because any church or council has declared his word to be of eternal validity, but because the heart of the child leaps up to meet his revelation of the Father and finds its own true life and liberty in bowing to its authority. Let any man earnestly consider the life and message of Jesus and he will find his own spiritual

consciousness singularly stirred and quickened. Not only does it feel the impulse as of a divine appeal, but speaks itself with a new voice of insistence and authority. And in the end, to his great comfort, it will not let him doubt that this God — the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ — will be our God even until death. For in the last analysis we recognize that the authority of our own spiritual experience, speaking through conscience and intellect and emotion, is but the authority of the eternal God, whose voice it echoes.

This is the new and inner citadel of faith. At least, if it is not new, it is newly disclosed to us by the breaking down of the strongholds in which men so long had put their trust. It was necessary to overthrow the old bulwarks of arbitrary authority, on which the church had come so largely to rely as a sufficient protection, before men could understand how unshakably secure were the real defenses of the soul's inheritance. God's truth for the uplifting of human life is not such as can be undermined or overthrown by any wave of intellectual enlightenment, in the nineteenth century or any other. If the supports of faith are weakened by the rising tide of knowledge, the trouble is with the supports and not with faith. But the whole effect of this rising tide, and of the

stormy and urgent experience through which so many have been passing in our time, is that the real and abiding foundations have become increasingly apparent.

This inner circle of realities, centering about the personality of Jesus Christ, is then the impregnable stronghold of faith. We need to set ourselves to consider earnestly what they are — these facts that challenge investigation, not as shadowy doctrines of the past, but as realities as incontestable and surely as important as those of the scientific laboratory. It is true that they are spiritual phenomena, not physical; but no one in these days can suppose them less vitally related to the long process of human development on that account.

It is the historic character of Jesus Christ that is, of course, the central fact of all. We know it well, and the amazing powers that have been found inherent in it, unaffected by lapse of time, as in a fragment of radium. It is a fact of unchallenged reality. No sane criticism is able to obscure its essential features. One might as well expect to bring Homer's *Iliad* to nought by criticism as to delete the abiding wonder from the story of the life of Jesus. Homer's *Iliad* stands before us, and will stand in the thought of men forever, as a work of unchallenged genius. And so the life-experience of Jesus, as we

read it in his words and works, stands before us to the ever-increasing admiration of the world. The wonder of it grows as the spiritual culture and insight of mankind grow more critically keen. It is more influential over men today, beyond all question, than it was one hundred years ago, in an age far less exacting and less critical; and as for the men and women of the first century, how far better are we able to judge of its unique and unapproachable qualities than were they, who knew so little of the race history of the soul's needs and struggles.

It is true that biblical criticism, in the sifting of the New Testament records, has thrown doubt on many passages here and there — doubt that the most reverent scholarship has sometimes to admit. But when all has been done that searching scholarship and sympathetic criticism may do, the main outlines of the life and character and message of Jesus remain unaltered. There have been days in the last seventy-five years when men have dealt with the character of Jesus as though it had neither unity nor beauty nor significance, as though it were a patchwork of unrelated odds and ends from many hands; and so have stripped away far the larger part of the recorded words and acts that reveal the Man of all men, as being mere obscuring accretions of a later time. They have " re-

stored the original " in such wise that what had been the world's supreme possession of beauty and of strength is left only the crude and disappointing effort of an amateur; as though a man should stand before the façade of York Minster and gradually strip away all its exquisite ornamentation, its delicate tracery of arch and window and pinnacle, leaving only the gaunt walls, sufficient to uphold the roof, and assert that he had thus uncovered the architect's real conception, and that all else was but meaningless addition. Yet the artist's genius still speaks in the superb uplifting whole, before which so many generations have stood in reverent delight.

The great war has done this service for the world of biblical scholars, that it has enabled them to see how a certain Prussianism of method may enter even into the field of biblical criticism, and regardless of decisive ethical or spiritual considerations hack its way through even such sacred ground as Olivet and Gethsemane and Calvary, in the interest of an arbitrary personal theory that must be made to prevail, although the surest intuitions of the spirit are outraged in the process. And it may be doubted whether ever again there will return to plague us in the same degree the exquisite irrationality of construing the world's sublimest pos-

session of moral power and beauty, as the incongruous patchwork creation of a half-dozen envious and fanatic Jews in the first and second centuries.

In any event, it will be conceded by practically all observers that never has the figure of Jesus Christ stood out so radiantly clear as it does today, impressing itself upon the world of thought in a degree hitherto unequaled, by the sheer compulsion of its power and sweet reasonableness, in the face of human weakness and folly. The madness of war, and the wickedness of the individual and national pride and selfishness that led up to it, have thrown into clearer relief than before the unapproachable dignity and universal validity of the spirit and teaching of the great Elder Brother of the race. In a time of barbaric cruelty, out of a race bigoted and passionate, with an almost frenzied sense of national superiority and of contempt for all lesser breeds without the law, there emerged this divinely human Friend of men, that even the twentieth century, drenched in misery, yearningly recognizes as its only Deliverer. Depend upon it, there is no phenomenon in the long history of men so outstandingly and unassailably clear, untouched in its essential features after all these years either by the tooth of time or by the endless obscurations of

friend and foe, as the personality of Jesus, about which centers the citadel of our faith.

Here is the Man of men! We find in him the flower of our race, the crown of manhood, in which, after the long ages of development, life has reached its supreme achievement. There is in him a perfection of the highest powers of manhood that transcends all that we know of what the struggle for life has attained elsewhere. Not even yet has his power spent itself, nor have men yet perceived how supremely victorious was his brief career.

Here, then, is the inquiry that leads us on to faith. How came he, out of so unfriendly an environment, to be victorious over all the hostile forces that limit men and hold them back from attainment of their highest possibilities? We of this twentieth century, who have grown so wise in our mastery of the forces of nature and of all the arts of living, seem little farther advanced in the higher life of the spirit than was the generation of Socrates. On every hand we are beset with the old, old enemies of moral health, from within and from without, that not only harass but weaken and cripple us, and entail such fears and regrets as destroy our peace and hold us back from the high estate that we can dimly perceive as ours by right. How comes it that out of the

darkness of that first century there stands, in ever clearer light, the figure of this man who actually attained life as it was meant to be, who succeeded in overcoming the world as none ever have succeeded who went before or followed after? How does it happen that the highest evolution of our race, the most perfectly developed life of which we know anything in the whole universe of living things, should have been achieved by this Galilean peasant?

Has the science of today any inquiry more vital than is this? Are any of the great inventors, busy with high explosives and more efficient means of meeting death with death, wrestling with problems more directly related to human welfare? Let us be sure that, in studying the conditions that produced a life like that of Jesus, we are engaged in an inquiry, not for the religious only or the piously minded, but of inexpressible concern for every lover of the race, who would fain see the joy of life at the full for all the children of men. From what root does moral victory at the highest grow?

The answer to the inquiry is not far to seek. Yet let us be sure at the outset that our judgment is not made worthless by the suggestion, openly made or half-consciously entertained, that Jesus won a triumphant manhood because he was a God sojourning

on earth, victorious over human besetments by virtue of a divine birthright that separated him from all his fellows. We must give full weight to the unmistakable facts on which his early friends laid such stress, to forestall just such error. He was a man born of a woman, made in all things like unto his brethren, tempted in all points as we are, made perfect through suffering, learning obedience through the things that he suffered, and though with strong crying and tears yet carrying his obedience even unto death. The victory he won in the face of all life's ills was a victory of triumphant manhood, and the principles by which he triumphed are eternally valid for his brethren.

His moral victory grew out of his perfect adjustment to a certain realm of ideas apprehended only by faith. This perfection of adjustment is inseparably related to his perfection of character. The two are as obviously and inseparably related as the break of dawn is related to the rising sun. This faith was the dynamic life-principle that gave to him a moral stature beyond that of all mankind beside. His courage, his gentleness, his truth, his purity, his self-possession in the face of fear, his inflexible faithfulness, and his unselfish love of men that was not dulled or daunted by any personal consideration, were all manifestly rooted in this sub-

lime engagement of his soul with things unseen. And the world of realities from which his soul drank in this unequaled strength to overcome is the very world which the spirit of our age tells us we safely may ignore as unproven and unknowable — the vast realm of truth that gathers about the presence with us men of a living personal God and loving Father.

The spirit of Jesus was perfectly adjusted at every point to this great reality. He believed in God, trusted him, loved him, and lived only to do his will. As he said explicitly of himself, he did not speak his own words, or do his own works, or seek his own glory. He was a man under the welcome constraint of a great affection. Day by day he was in communication with another, whose perfect instrument he sought to be, in death as well as life. His whole life and character were but the expression of this all-pervasive, all-controlling faith and purpose. Jesus was what he was because his whole being was controlled and shaped by this sensitive adjustment of all his powers to the God in whom he trusted. This cannot be denied. It is as clear as the light. It is a fact in the moral world upon which we may build as securely as we build on the fact of gravitation. The supreme development in all the universe of organic life — the

personality of Jesus — grew out of his adjustment to a single group of formative ideas — the fact of God, and of such a God as his Father. Here, then, is the citadel of our own faith, so beset with assailing forces — the fact of the overcoming life of Jesus as the product of faith in God.

It is one of the fundamental laws of development, with which present-day science has made us all familiar, that life is dependent on the adjustment of inner to outer relations, and is proportioned in its fulness to the perfection of this relation with its actual environment. If the adjustment is imperfect, or if for any reason it is adapted to other than the actually prevailing environment, the life is stunted or destroyed. But the supreme manifestation of life of which we have any knowledge, the majestic life of Jesus Christ, was developed through its perfect adjustment to a realm of ideas concerning God that Jesus pronounced the fundamental realities of life. If they were not realities, if he was mistaken in his faith, if they were but delusions that yet built him up to such spiritual stature, then indeed we are confronted by a miracle, and not a beneficent miracle, but one that reduces to chaos the ordered universe of law. For here is a violent interruption of the law that elsewhere is universally applicable to living

things. We have the highest development proceeding from a mistaken adjustment to a non-existent order. There was a marvelously complete adaptation, but it was pathetically groping after a sustaining environment that had no existence save in an overwrought imagination. Yet out of this mocking delusion, this misdirected application of life-energy, grew the consummate perfection of human capacities that we see in the character of Jesus.

The enormity of the contradiction would not be so great if it had resulted only in a life that in its own day appeared successful, but that presently, as time passed, revealed the specious unreality of its excellence and betrayed the deceit upon reason from which it sprang. But just the opposite has happened. The centuries have only increased men's wonder at the inexhaustible richness of Jesus' personality. Its worth and genuineness have been subjected to every test that the wit of man could devise, whether in love or hate. And never has it stood so strong in the divine simplicity of its power as at this time. And the tortured nations confess that the principles by which it grew so great are the only principles by which the abundant life may return to society today.

So we believe that the pre-eminence of Jesus is not a blunder and a miracle of

mocking chance, to set at naught the world of cause and effect, and disorder the realm of ordered law. It was an actual environment of reality to which his whole being was adjusted, in his walk with an unseen God. To know his will, to think his thoughts, to do his pleasure, to walk with him by day and night, was not the dream of a visionary, it was life's supreme functioning. It was the sublimest reality that is given men to experience. It carried a dynamic current of immeasurable potency. And in the life of Jesus — Galilean peasant though he was — we of the twentieth century see the revelation of the eternal truth. What Jesus believed and experienced and lived was true. It was no seductive falsehood that made him the Man among men, but the blessed reality that often seems to us too good to be true. It was the truth of an Almighty Father, as compassionate, as loving, as devoted to the uplifting of downtrodden men and women, as was Jesus himself — of a God who has made us for himself, and for whom we hunger, in the dark or in the light, as inevitably as a child hungers for its parents.

This is the faith of Jesus Christ, that made him what he was. And because we cannot but believe in him, we cannot do other than commit ourselves unreservedly to his faith in God.

CHAPTER V

The Life as a Witness to the Truth

IN the reminiscences of her girlhood, given in the autobiography of Frances Power Cobbe, is the following pathetic passage:

> Then ensued four years on which I look back as pitiful in the extreme. In complete mental solitude and great ignorance I found myself facing all the dread problems of human existence. For a long time my intense desire to remain a Christian predominated, and brought me back from each return to scepticism in a passion of repentance and prayer to Christ to take my life or my reason sooner than allow me to stray from the fold. In those days no such thing was heard of as "broad" interpretations of Scripture doctrines. To be a Christian then was to believe implicitly in the verbal inspiration of every word of the Bible, and to adore Christ as "very God of very God." Had anything like modern theories . . . been known to me at this crisis of my life, it is possible that the whole course of my spiritual history would have been different. But Evangelical Christianity in 1840 presented itself as a thing to be taken whole or rejected wholly.
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> As time went on, I saw all that had made to me the supreme glory and joy of life fade out of it. In the summer after my twentieth birthday, I had reached the end of the long struggle. It left me with something as nearly like a *tabula rasa* of faith as can well be imagined. I definitely disbelieved in human immortality and in a supernatural revelation.

It is impossible to read such a passage without sadness and deep sympathy — sympathy for the young girl striving to be

honest above all, even at the cost of that which made life sweet, and sadness that her experience should be typical of that of tens of thousands of the noblest spirits, from her day till now. You may meet women of middle age today in almost any cultured circle, who, if they chose to speak on a buried chapter in their lives, could repeat almost word for word this sorrowful confession of the wrecking of a once precious faith. And no thoughtful man can have lived out half his life without having had occasion, over and again, to reflect on the tragedy of attempting to coerce faith in a completed system of authoritative doctrine.

It is the needlessness of it all that most impresses one. If only these troubled inquirers could have realized that the supreme object of faith is the revelation brought by Jesus Christ and witnessed by the voice of God in our own souls; that all other questions are of necessity subsidiary and by comparison even unimportant! They are the victims of a system of teaching that made the size of the ark, or the righteousness of oriental massacres, as necessary an object of belief as the words of Jesus on purity or forgiveness. They did not know that the teaching and example of Jesus might be trusted utterly, even though they should be inconsistent with Old Testament impreca-

tions upon one's enemies. The defenses of their faith were no stronger than their weakest link, and indeed, it was on these weakest links that their attention became almost wholly centered. The primacy of Jesus and the supreme authority of his words were lost sight of in the dust of old controversies, and the attention of these seekers after truth was diverted to a multitude of irritating problems of minor importance, amid which they wandered as in a spiritual wilderness, until they had hopelessly lost sight of Him who is alone the light of the world.

We who have faced the confusing changes of the last thirty years should not suffer from a similar confusion! We have reached the day when we should see clearly that everything in the Bible is of value only as it leads up to and illuminates the message brought by Jesus Christ, in word and life. And we shall not go astray if we rest our entire faith on that foundation. It is of the utmost moment, however, that we should face the personality of Jesus with the most honest and earnest inquiry of which our minds are capable. It constitutes the central problem for the spiritual life, and the central fire from which must come all its warmth. The moral issues that group themselves around such a life of victory as that of the Man of Nazareth must needs be the most vital of all

issues for human thought. And we shall do well to carry a little farther into detail our present inquiry as to what his character was, and what its bearings are upon our faith today. Wherein lies its strange compulsion upon our spirits and what witness does it offer to the value of the total message that he brought?

Probably most of us in our childhood took over our parents' estimate of Jesus, without special appreciation of his character, yet with a sincere loyalty of gratitude because we believed he gave himself to be our Saviour. We believed on him as the one through whom alone we should be saved from sin and find our way to eternal life in the world to come. But as we have grown older, the years have greatly widened our understanding of what this present life means, as the field in which human character is to be wrought out. Its temptations and perils, its seductive compromises, its wrongs and cruelties and abuses — all the fierceness of the struggle for justice and truth and mercy and love among men — have become for us enthrallingly real and vivid, so that our early anxiety to save our souls by believing on Jesus has grown dim and pale by comparison. We are so tumultuously pressed by the effort not only to keep our own life clean and honorable and coura-

geous in the face of unremitting temptation, but to have a little part also in the fight for the safety and welfare of others who are trodden down in the struggle, that the future life and its tremendous issues are of necessity pushed somewhat into the background.

On the other hand, the urgent need of moral strength, of stern integrity of character, in the unrelenting conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil, is ever more clear to our apprehension. Moral inadequacy confronts us, not only within but on every side. There is need of courage and of unflinching loyalty to certain great causes, and we find timidity or indifference; we look for helpers of a passionate devotion to a high ideal, and we find self-interest or self-seeking breaking down their single-heartedness; we look for staunch friends, and find that they cannot be counted on in an emergency; we expect an unblemished integrity, and we have met too often with dishonor and duplicity. On the other hand, we have come to value beyond all expression the qualities that go to make up the true friends and helpers of men, the men and women whom we have learned to revere, whose unselfish sympathy with the sufferings of the oppressed makes them the champions of God's poor. And we have come to value also the more hidden and fragrant

qualities of the spirit, that, nourished in secret, make it more easy for us to believe in God and to feel that he is not far from every one of us.

As we have come through a whole generation of such experience of human nature, its mingled frailty and strength, its humiliation and victory, in the endless endeavor after character, we have reached a point where, if we are in deadly earnest, we find ourselves turning with the whole strength of our being to such a leader as Jesus Christ, simply because he was what he was — because all that we most long for and most revere in human life today we find in him. Such a champion of the weak he was; such a friend unto death, true as a sword-blade under strain, to those who loved him; of such gallant and unswerving courage under hopeless odds; so gentle and so firm; so faithful to duty, so true to the highest, so unstained with earth's corruption and so perfect in unselfish love.

Little did we know, as boys and girls, what all this meant in the story of Jesus — how costly such qualities are to win, and how hard to keep; how rare they are among men, but how unspeakably precious and comforting as we see them here and there reflected in lives about us. But now we know — that is, we faintly begin to know —

through hard experience. At least we know enough to cleave to such a leader with all our heart and soul, because everything we most want in life is gathered up in him.

We believe in him! It is not the belief of our childhood. Perhaps that was as simple and as sincere, but it was not the same. This is not something that we were taught, or that we inherited, or that the church has handed down in the creeds; neither is it a faith accepted as the means of securing salvation. It is a part of our spontaneous self-expression, in the effort to be at our best. It is the fruit of our own soul's travail with life. It is what we have been taught of God while the years of moral struggle have been going on. It is the hunger for a good fellowship so strong and masterful as actually to be redeeming in its influence.

Consider, one by one, several of those qualities in him that made him what he was, and that are most evident and most appealing.

We cannot think of him at all, apart from his sympathy for men. It is the most outstanding characteristic of his life. He went about doing good — not professionally, but because he could not do otherwise, caring for people as he did. His chief interest in life was people — the men and women whom he met from day to day. His interest in

them was so genuine, and his sympathy for their needs so warm, that he seems always to have been followed by needy folk. Some of us are left very much alone — to our books or our business or our own concerns, whatever they are; it is taken for granted, justly or unjustly, that we do not want to be troubled by the cares of others. There was no danger of making that mistake with Jesus. His was not the greatness that makes solitary. Such sympathy overflowed from him that in all that Syrian province it was manifest that the common people had no friend like him. All sorts and conditions of men turned to him for sympathy and found it, from the babies whom their mothers brought for his blessing, to Pharisees and Roman officers, or broken-hearted souls who could trust none else.

All high-minded young people of today are talking much of social service, and already see themselves in coming years as unselfish helpers of society. But somehow, by the time one reaches middle age, the real lovers and servants of men are found to be very, very few, and most of them are what they are by contagion of this very quality in the life of Jesus. It is one of the great privileges of life to be in close touch with some of those noble souls who really love people for their own sake, and devote themselves

to others' good. It humbles us and makes us better men even to see them at their daily work. Perhaps there is nothing in life more manifestly divine than this. We cannot help believing that such love is of God. We profoundly covet something of it for ourselves. All of us believe wholeheartedly in people of that type; we cannot but do so, because of its divine appeal to that in us which is most divine.

But in Jesus we find this quality in its perfection. He was a helper of men before all else. He was even conscious of this himself, and serenely confident that he was able to give help if men would but allow him — even the kind of help that reaches behind all outward symptoms of misery to the root of the discomfort. As he said himself to a crowd of village people, " Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

When we were children it seemed to us a matter of course that Jesus should be the best man that ever lived, because he was the Son of God. But as we have grown older, do we not turn to a man like that with a great hunger both of longing and of affection? There is nothing in life more worthy, more beautiful, than the spirit that he had; and there is nothing more difficult to win, as we have proved. Yet still we aspire

toward it, and our utter loyalty would go out to such a leader. He calls us as the voice of God would call us. Indeed, we feel that his appeal to us in this respect is, of a truth, God's voice.

It is a profound reassurance to find, as another side of Jesus' character, a quality of which we are almost as much in need, his reverence for righteousness. Nothing could dull his burning consciousness of the great issues of life and death that must be at stake in such a moral universe as this. He refused to treat men as though bread or ease or length of days, any or all of them, were the chief end of life. There was no element of weakness or superficiality about his compassion for human wretchedness. He was as sternly strong and wise in dealing with others as he was in dealing with himself. When he was faint with hunger, he remembered that there were obligations of honor upon him as a child of God, greater than any obligation to keep himself alive with bread unworthily obtained. When brutal cruelty was staring him in the face, which he might have escaped had he consulted the overwhelming impulse of the moment, he held himself patiently submissive, in order that the holy will of one greater than he might be carried out. He involved even his closest friends in heart-breaking misfortune

— as the world counts misfortune — because he saw that in no other way could they so serve God's purpose, or themselves become so great. It was because he was so firm with himself that he could be so true to the needs of others. His whole life's activity was guided not only by a matchless sympathy for men, but by a discernment of life's highest ends that made his sympathy as righteous and uplifting as it was tender.

With some of the humanitarians of our day we have the uneasy feeling that their heart has its way at the expense of their head. Their philosophy of life is superficial. They are passionately conscious of men's wrongs and sorrows, and in their eagerness to bring immediate relief they perceive but faintly certain immutable principles of social well-being, that cannot be ignored without disaster. If their love of men were but refined and guided by their sense of the holiness of God as the abiding spring of human welfare, they would be better servants of their fellows. The leaders whom we shall need in the work of social reconstruction after the world war must be men and women great enough to see that peace and happiness for the nations can come only out of unflinching acceptance of a divine program for humanity. To be sternly true to the highest is even more humane than to be too com-

passionate to bear the thought of human suffering.

And in all this we recognize that Jesus reveals the perfect leadership. He kept himself clean, but he felt to the depth of his being the terrible penalties of uncleanness that God's law has provided. Day by day he walked obediently in the way his Father chose; but his heart ached as he saw the misery that sprang up in a hundred forms because men refused to choose God's will. His pity for men went deep — far deeper than the surface sorrows that we find it so hard to look upon. His life was the very unfolding of compassion itself; but it was a compassion rooted in the eternal righteousness.

Just because of our human weakness and superficiality — our readiness to put ease and comfort before truth and honor, both for ourselves and for society — we feel the supremacy of such a character. It is a revelation of what God would have us be. It has in it an element of appeal that is, again, like the appeal of God to our own souls. We would be what Jesus was! We would fain make our own the same sources of strength that made him great. We believe in the correctness of the spiritual insight that made him wise and strong where most of us are feeble and shortsighted. His way

is the way of truth. We have seen too much of well-meaning but incompetent leadership; so that if by any means we could come under such a prevailing influence as that of Jesus, it would be what we should desire as life's highest inspiration.

There is a very different quality that draws us to him as the years go by — his purity of soul. Even though we are not pessimistic in our judgment of human nature, yet, as our acquaintance with men increases, we come to see how fierce and unrelenting are the assaults of appetite and passion, and how scorching is the breath of that impurity whose moral devastation dwarfs even the ravages of drink. Many in our day do not perceive it because they make little effort to keep their own life clean. But just in proportion as one tries, as in the sight of a holy God, to keep his own heart and imagination unstained with evil, and still more as he joins in the struggle to make a clean life possible for the poor, or for the boys and girls of the coming generation, or for the soldiers in our camps, does he feel the supremacy and the wonder of such a character as Jesus, and the aching need for such an example and for such leadership before the eyes of men.

We are poisoned by the very atmosphere we breathe. But such was the self-control of

Jesus that he held himself in a heavenly atmosphere, where the insidious miasma of the coarse ideals of his time could not affect him. We feel that even if the secret and fugitive desires of his heart had been suddenly exposed — the test no soul of man would willingly endure — he would have been unashamed. In the story of his life there is not a word that parades his virtue in this regard; and yet, as one reads that story thoughtfully, he recognizes not only how Jesus guarded his own heart so that he could see God, but how his strength was like the shadow of a great rock to the frail, sin-stained lives that turned to him for refuge as to the untempted God himself.

As we freely face Jesus Christ, and meditate upon this his example and his appeal, we feel that the eternal righteousness appeals to us through him. The fiction and drama of our day leave us fairly bewildered as to what is possible or even desirable for present-day society in the way of heroic self-restraint for noble ends. But a half-hour's association with the personality of Jesus lifts us up to where we see, as by a divine illumination, what knightliness of unstained fidelity is the true estate of all the sons and daughters of God on earth. Do we not then turn to him with all the strength of our manhood if we are honest in the good fight? Would we

not cleave to such a one with all our heart because he makes us see clearly what none other can make us see? The chiefest hope for the renovation of the low standards of society today is in the moral illumination and moral power that radiate from his personality.

How many a virtuous man or woman has been cold and hard as the very law itself toward those who have lost hold on virtue and joy together. They have thought to emphasize their own correctness by severity to the weaknesses of others. But this man of spotless soul, who loathed the cancerous evil that defiled the image of the Father in the children, was yet the very friend of sinners. We are drawn to him by the whole strength of our heart's affection, because he was so divinely gentle with the weak. We love him for his treatment of those whom society affected to abhor. They carried the marks of their degradation. Evil associations had stamped them with the odious vulgarity of commonplace vice. Jesus' own mother would have shrunk from them instinctively. He did not even shrink from them. The fire of his love and sympathy burned out his natural repugnance. He brought the very love of God visibly to their understandings, though without trace of compromise with their guilt. We rejoice to think that the gentleness he showed was

the gentleness of the holy God toward those distressed and scattered sheep whom he would fain recall. We cannot equal it, but we can reverence it in him, and almost would this trait alone in the character of Jesus bind us to him as his disciples.

We pause for a moment upon his courage. As the tide of life's anxieties and cares comes flooding in upon us with the years, as we see how many lives about us are weakened in their later stages by timidity, or discouragement, or actual fear, we appreciate more and more the calm, strong self-possession of Jesus in the presence of multiplied disappointment. He realized in his brief career the utmost use of his capacities, because to each day's task he brought a freshness of determination and hopefulness utterly undaunted by adverse conditions. The ideals of character and service that he had before him were not dulled or made inoperative by dejection or irresolution, but were absolutely efficient in the control of his will. How well we know the type of character that, like Amiel's, is full of high aspirations, but yet goes through life crippled and ineffective to the end, for sheer want of the needful courage to put them into practice.

Jesus was all that a flawless courage could have made him. He went his way and spoke his message as freely, as whole-

heartedly, as though he were not bringing down upon his head an avalanche of hatred, from all the vested interests of his time. He feared neither church nor state, even though they were to crush him at the last. He could not be shaken by the favor or disfavor of the crowd, nor made despondent by the fickleness of inconstant followers. There was in him that vital sense of power, that certainty of ultimate victory, that made him invulnerable to any of the paralyzing fears and anxieties that have dragged down so many gallant spirits in the fight for better things. Even when all seemed lost, and he knew that his enemies would be gloating over his sufferings before the week was out, he was calmly forgetful of himself in his loving ministry to his friends; the fear of death itself could not shake the confidence with which he bequeathed his peace and joy to his disciples.

Every one of us is conscious that this is what life ought to be; that every soul of man should have such undiscourageable purpose, such hope and cheer, invincible in the face of misfortune, as to make life sweet and strong in spite of assailing fear. That would be life at its best — not a bovine contentment with unbroken ease, but a superb strength of self-possession to meet and overcome all enemies. Jesus alone realized it in

its completeness. He could not know the foreboding dread of any evil future, because his whole being was perfectly gathered up in the will to do his Father's will, and in the confidence that that will could lead only to joy, even though sorrow met him on the way. If only we, too, could so far learn his spirit as to meet each day with new-born courage for the day's adventure! Only this, we are persuaded, is life as it was meant to be.

CHAPTER VI

The Personality of Jesus

WE need to touch on only a single further quality of Jesus, that can hardly be overlooked in any estimate of the man — his loyalty to truth. Confucius has much to say of sincerity. Yet the influence of his teaching has been to produce a type of moral development, in the state and in society, in which insincerity seems to have been raised almost to the *n*th power. The influence of Jesus' character, after so long a time, is such that no man can drink deeply of his spirit and not fear a lie, or any sham or way of imposture. The official representatives of his religion, and his professed followers, have often enough feared the truth and tried to hold it at a distance. But it needs little knowledge of Jesus' life to see how false they were to his spirit.

His closest personal friend said that truth came by Jesus Christ — such a flood of light did he throw on what it meant and what its obligations were. He said himself that he came to be a witness to the truth. He maintained that witness through all perils, and upheld it at the cost of life. He was as true as steel, so far as we can see, in every

one of life's relations into which he entered. Indeed, he did not hesitate to claim that he was the truth. He felt himself to be the guiding light for deceived and bewildered humanity so that none who followed him should walk in darkness. His simplicity and singleness of character, as we read the story of his life, are beyond all question. He was honest and obedient to the call of truth in every fiber of his being. We cannot associate with him any sort of pretense or unreality or make-believe. He was sincerity itself, because he lived each hour in the eye of God. And all that we have ever imagined of fidelity to truth, and fearless, flawless honesty before God, is summed up in him.

All these features of the character of Jesus, so briefly touched upon, are unmistakable. We need no theologian to explain to us their message, nor any church teaching to enforce it on our attention or demand for it our assent. It lies upon the surface of the historic record. The character of Jesus is there for all to see. Men may affect to ignore it, but it is an affectation as silly as it is unworthy. And for those of us who are in earnest in seeking honor and glory and immortality, for ourselves and others, it grips our attention inevitably, whatever may be the type of our religious experience, because

it so vitally concerns the spirit's struggle for supremacy. If we are honest in our search for spiritual enlargement, we shall hold with a sort of life-and-death tenacity to this personality of Jesus, demanding to know what it means. Here is life at its maximum worth and value. How did it come to be, and what is its significance? It is of more practical concern to us than a mine of fabulous richness, for something more precious than gold is at stake. It has to do with the possibility for us, and for society, of love and purity and honor and truth and courage, and all the transmutation of baser elements that comes with faith in God. What sure conclusions may we reach regarding it, and what validation does it offer to the wider message that he brought?

The most obvious reflection comes from the familiar principle that what is intellectually unsound cannot lead in the end to what is morally sound. Here we have, in the personality of Jesus Christ, the most perfect moral soundness of which we have any knowledge. It has been tried by every test that mortal earnestness could devise, because the issues that hang upon it are of such tremendous moment. And yet never were men so sure that there is no unsoundness in it, but the fullest health and energy of the spirit. It has been abused and ridiculed

ever since that Roman soldier drew the picture of the figure with the ass's head, nailed to the cross. It has been an offense and a stumbling-block to heathen philosophers and to all the apostles of self-will, down to the Nietzscheans of today. Yet still, for all the world in humble earnest search for moral victory, it is the revelation of the supreme excellence possible to man.

The intellectual convictions from which it sprang are obvious, as we have seen; they were those of a complete and unswerving faith in the God and Father whom Jesus portrayed to the men of his time. They are set forth with clearness in the Sermon on the Mount, and throughout the gospel narratives. They were the root from which alone such a life could spring: the life was but the natural efflorescence of that perfect confidence in Almighty Love. After many centuries' experience of the moral strivings of men, we cannot conceive its development from any other source. Yet here is the conclusion with which we are confronted if the destructive criticism of our time is correct:

The root from which it sprang is a root of error. The conviction that nourished it to its completeness was a delusion. The character that grew out of it was therefore abnormal and improper to man as Nature would have him be, and its unfailing appeal to

humanity in all ages marks out no way to higher life, but only to further misadjustment and misdevelopment. The profound attraction that it has for the human spirit is therefore not reasonable or purposive or beneficent, but senseless and injurious, as the too seductive appeal of error must ever be. The light he seems to shed on life is but an *ignis fatuus* after all, and to follow it is to plunge into the hopeless dark.

As we stand face to face with the personality of Jesus in our moments of clearest spiritual insight, recognizing its appeal to all in us that is most divine, and listen with utter honesty for our soul's judgment, is this the conclusion in which we rest? Are we not rather compelled — not by any external authority but by " the impulsion of our own higher selves " — to admit both the divine beauty of Jesus' character and the validity of the convictions from which it grew?

We find ourselves at middle age still hard pressed by temptations and doubts and fears, looking more wistfully than ever before for a way of courage and strength and moral victory. And here we find it, in the way by which Jesus found it, the way of faith in God. There is a moral certitude that is as convincing to the spirit as is a mathematical demonstration to the intellect. Thus we are as sure that selfish indulgence

at the cost of another's ruin is morally degrading as we are that two and two make four. We cannot demonstrate it, but we do not need to demonstrate it — we know it. And thus in facing Jesus Christ, in utter honesty of purpose, we are convinced that in him is not darkness, but light; not delusion, but truth; not mockery of human hopes, but hope itself. So we take as our own his childlike faith in a God who has made us for himself, and who asks from us only what he gives — love.

And not only does the character of Jesus Christ lead us to accept without argument the faith that shaped his life. Its perfect balance, its sanity and wisdom lead us to accept as valid the content of his own consciousness regarding himself. There is a convincing unity about his personality that will not let us regard him as half sane, half crazed — half wise, half foolish. The perfect humility with which he surrendered himself to his Father's leading, in the purpose to listen to his voice, and speak his words, and do his works, forbids us to believe that he was himself misguided, mistaken as to his own worth to men, or that he drew them astray because he was himself distraught. There is a limpid clearness about his own thought of himself, from the very first day of his ministry. He came as a Saviour of

men. He felt that in him was help; that he was a channel of the redeeming energy of God for sinful men. He did not try to efface himself, as did Confucius as the mere transmitter of a divine message. He besought men to confide in him, to take him as their Master, because he knew that he was the way to the Father. Life was in him, and light, and he knew that as they turned to him they found deliverance from the power of sin.

Nor was this relation of friend and helper to helpless men to be a matter of two or three years only, and within the tiny limits of his own travels. He obviously thought of it as a timeless relation, which his own death could not affect. His courage and hopefulness were largely based on this, that neither the Pharisees of his day, nor Herod nor Pilate nor Roman soldiers, could bring to an end his activities for the bruised and broken-hearted children of God. For a moment these activities were to be visibly interrupted, but only that they might be taken up again with wider scope, after his bodily presence was withdrawn. It is impossible to read the record without finding evidence of this at every turn. Even in the Sermon on the Mount, in the only passage referring directly to himself, he speaks of the Day of Judgment as the time when many will hear from his lips the final assurance of their own unworthi-

ness for the Kingdom. And in all conversations with his friends as to their future relations with him, he scarcely regarded the fact that he would be of the unseen world while they were still on earth. Evidently his self-consciousness was that of one who stood in a unique relation of sonship to God and of abiding Saviourhood and Mastership for men. He counted himself the Lord of that Kingdom for whose coming he bade men pray.

We do not need so much as to allude to the metaphysical problem of the trinity, or to discuss the question of his deity, but only to give due weight to the facts of his self-consciousness as they lie upon the surface. They were accepted by all his earliest friends and followers as indubitable, even if perplexing, and it was only in later generations that men strove so earnestly to explain them in creed and formula. It is not easy to see how we can believe in him, as a revelation of God's truth and grace for human life, and not trust these most deeply rooted convictions of his being — that he was sent of God to be a Saviour, and the light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world. It was this conviction, inseparable from his faith in the One who sent him, that together with it made him what he was. We believe in it, and in his abiding presence with men, if for

no other reason, because we cannot honestly find a way to disbelieve in him.

There is also the further reflection that such unequaled moral soundness must have carried with it a spiritual insight of supreme clearness. It is the pure in heart who see God. It is those who walk most closely with him who, in the very nature of the case, must best understand his ways with men. And it follows of necessity from the supreme moral excellence of Jesus that he is the supreme spiritual teacher. Indeed, this is what it means, above all else, to believe in Jesus: that we should unhesitatingly recognize the unique and satisfying validity of his teachings.

What is prayer? Our generation has a hundred answers. But to whose judgment shall we give most weight? Shall it be first of all Mrs. Eddy, or Mrs. Besant, or the latest exponent of the New Thought, or even the latest philosophical authority at Jena or at Harvard? Or shall we trust the spiritual insight of Jesus in things pertaining to God, as we trust the wisdom of no other authority? Is there a life beyond this life? If we believe in Jesus, we shall rest upon his simple confidence in the matter, though all the professors in two continents were to bewilder us with arguments.

To believe in Jesus is to rest upon his clear

teachings as on an unshakable foundation. And when our heart, in the day of trouble, cries out for some assurance that God is still behind this remorseless world that crashes on unconscious over our quiveringly sensitive lives, we shall rest upon that unwavering trust of Jesus in the Father's care even for the sparrow, and his tender love for men and women with hearts made to love and suffer and seek comfort.

This is what it means, at its simplest, for us to believe in Jesus Christ, as in those far-off days when men and women were first drawn to him. Leaving on one side the Canaanites and Ninevites and the date of the prophecy of Daniel, and the genuineness of Second Peter, and the order of the documents behind the Gospels, it is to turn directly to the supreme revelation, to which all the spiritual literature of the race leads up, the life and message of him whom we rejoice to call our Lord. To do this in loyalty and love is to find ourselves face to face with a divine energy of life and light and love that proves its reality by its power. However inclusive our faith may come to be, this must always be its center, as it is the heart of its defense.

In the desolate gorges of the mountains that hem in the Colorado Desert, where only cacti and desert shrubs are to be found, one

is often surprised and delighted to come upon superb palms, springing out of the rocky soil. They may stand as solitary sentinels, or in groups of two or three, but sometimes they cluster together in shady groves of hundreds, of an indescribable wonder and beauty. Some have been deeply charred with fire, others have been scarred or wounded by men or animals. Any variety of deciduous tree under similar circumstances would long ago have been exterminated. Yet here they have continued through the centuries, the splintered blistering rock of the desert about their feet, but with their glorious crown of leaves mounting into the blue and rustling softly in the breeze.

The only explanation of their marvelous persistence is that they are endogens — they grow from within. Their life sap is not contained in a thin layer of external bark, always exposed to injury, but their every fiber from the heart outward is a channel of life and nourishment.

It is a true illustration of the Christian faith that grows up from an inner experience of the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ. If there is any inner core of loyalty and affection in our being, it is vitalized and inspired by him who has in fact brought God into our life. Our confidence in him becomes an inner principle of faith and action, that

tends always to grow more strong and fruitful. It would seem impossible for a faith so rooted not to grow with years, in spite of shock and accident, simply because it is a part of our truest self, and is not vulnerable to chance assaults that, however menacing at the time, can only after all reach and scar the surface.

There is a type of faith that is not so much like a living plant as like a globe of glass. An injury at one point of its elaborate structure will bring the whole to ruin. Even though the injury may come through the most prayerfully earnest search for truth, it is equally destructive. But to live thoughtfully to middle age is to find faith growing more simple — more like what it was in the days when men first followed after Jesus, because, in spite of priest and synagogue, they believed in him. It was his life that drew them then; and today it is still his life and words and works that draw us on to fuller understanding of his mission, and to that passionate gratitude for the forgiving love of God that underlies and vitalizes every most noble motive in human life.

CHAPTER VII

The Witness of the Life-Stream

IT is natural that we should tend to become pragmatists as we grow older. We grow tired of argument, and insist on judging men and theories by the way they work. As young people we were insatiably eager for principles that could be logically established. We had the idea that only intellectual demonstration could be satisfactory as a ground for belief, and that philosophy alone could give us those sure convictions on which we might build a life. It was by delving among the roots of things that we were to satisfy ourselves of the truth. But as years go by, our point of view insensibly yet almost inevitably changes. We have seen so much of principles that do not work, and of professions that do not count, that we find ourselves seeking the test of truth not among the roots of things but among their fruits. A logically impregnable philosophy of life and its issues is a most agreeable possession, if one can find it; but a philosophy which actually works out into victorious living is immeasurably better; and from the middle-age point of view it is more likely to be true.

And still more as regards men, do we judge them ruthlessly by their net performance. Persuasive speech, soaring aspirations, humanitarian ideals of purest ray serene, the program and promise of disinterested reform along many lines, all come to be weighed, in the end, in the scales of actual yield for human service. Youthful or ardent reformers may claim that we who are older are stubborn or skeptical or worldly; it seems to us that we are merely reasonable. They claim that the great principles involved should receive our enthusiastic support; we feel that the principles should demonstrate their soundness by their visible contribution to human welfare. By their fruits we judge them, even when their professions soar to heaven.

Above all is this true of that supreme claim on human life, the call to the discipleship of Jesus. There may have been a time in our experience when we would have settled its validity by argument. But the more we see of life, if we observe it at close range and sympathetically, the more are we impressed by what we see in it of the living energy of the spirit of Jesus, working still for human happiness as it used to work in Palestine — only a thousand times reinforced and extended. Even when we have grown utterly weary of the arguments and assertions of the theolo-

gians, the sight of this great river of refreshing turns our thought backward to him who is its source, with a new sense of faith and devotion, that are beyond all argument and that can never leave us so long as we remain ourselves. We have come to understand the Founder of Christianity, not so much by what we were taught, and not wholly by what we read in the gospels, but by what we see of his life reflected in the lives of men and women of today. To judge a leader by the working out of his claims and teachings through many centuries and in alien civilizations is really a terrific test. Yet it is this test that so powerfully reinforces our present-day confidence in Jesus Christ.

It was impossible for the first friends of Jesus to estimate as can we the power of his personality and teaching, just as it was impossible for Bucer or Melanchthon to judge, as can we of a later age, of their friend Luther's strength and weakness. Centuries needed to pass before it could be evident how the great reformer's timidity in later years crept up upon his early boldness, or how the elements of weakness in his teaching have limited the progress of the church that bears his name. The faith of Jesus, tested by its fitness for a very simple form of society among an Oriental people, might yield a very different result when applied to the

highly complex society and scientifically critical judgment of the Western world in the twentieth century. Yet the real test of its worth must be found in such universal applicability to human need.

Surely, one who has watched for a whole generation the working of the gospel of Jesus amid the seething interests of our modern life, should be able to arrive at some clear-cut conviction as to whether its present-day efficiency bears any satisfying witness to its divine origin. His observation, in any case, must react profoundly on his earlier faith, either to confirm or to destroy.

To many of us, it would seem that there is no escaping this conclusion as to the influence of Jesus in the life of today, — that its divinest activities are those of his creation and inspiration. One is reminded of that noble couplet, written of the mighty dead in a nation's past,

> "They passed, they passed, but cannot pass away,
> For England feels them in her blood like wine."

The spirit of Jesus thrills in the noblest life-blood of this generation, moving it to endeavors worthy of the children of God. And though our civilization as a whole is still moved by suspicions and envies and hatreds, yet the eager impulse of hope and love born of God is strengthening every

year — and its strength is rooted and builded up in the faith of Jesus Christ.

But here, straight across the path of our argument, lies the world-wide devastation of the Great War, — like a vast avalanche of misery that Christendom has deliberately brought down upon itself, at the close of the most prosperous and enlightened era of its existence. If the spirit of Jesus is living today, and even growing in its hold upon the hearts of men, how is it that this sum of all evils has come upon us?

It scarcely needs serious reflection to perceive how the aggressive militarism that gave it birth has reached its present deadly power, not under the fostering of any sort of Christian teaching or influence, but in direct hostility to the actual teaching of Jesus. There is need of plain speaking at this point, not in ill-will to any people (because the same anti-Christian element is potentially present in every one of the great nations), but for the sake of the simple truth, which for many persons seems to be obscured.

It is now sixty years and more since Prof. Max Müller, on coming to Oxford, expressed his regret that so few of the educated men of his own nation attended church; and from that time to this there has hardly been any observer of the habits of the German people but has commented on the almost complete

absence from public worship of educated men. There may be partial explanation of this in the coldness of German confessionalism on the one hand and the heartlessness of much of its radical theology on the other. But the fact remains that the men of today who constitute the military caste are in general — with some exceptions — the men who for generations have openly showed their distaste for Christian teaching. If one is to be a whole-hearted admirer of the "man of blood and iron," he has simply to part company with the Leader whose disciples were to be first of all "tender-hearted, humble-minded." Add to this the fact, which so universally shocks the American observer, of the frank immorality of German university life, and the consequent hostility on the part of men in their formative years to the stern restraint upon personal liberty involved in the sincere following of Jesus, and we stand in sight of a chief reason why one of the oldest of Christian peoples has had for these last fifty years, as its proudest and most exalted caste, the professional slayers of men.

This particular development has come out of an open estrangement from the teaching of Jesus. There is no true Christianity save that of actual fellowship of spirit with him who made love, mercy and forgiveness the primary conditions of discipleship. And

one needs only to consider for a moment the uncompromising demands of the Master, to recognize how essentially anti-Christian, rather than un-Christian, are the pride and arrogance and love of power that grow rank as tropical verdure in any class to which the pride of war is as the breath of its nostrils. It does not matter what is the race or people. Every great nation has in its midst certain elements that would find their personal fortunes in promoting international ill-will and paving the way for wholesale human slaughter.

This is not the product of Christianity, nor the fruit of the influence of Jesus. The same spirit sent him to his death, and still today is secretly but bitterly hostile to his gospel of self-denying brotherhood and love. There are as many enemies to the spirit of Jesus in Christendom today as there were in Palestine of old, and there is nothing strange in the fact that they should still be strong enough, under the intensive culture of Prussian militarism for fifty years, to involve all Europe, against its better will and conscience, in the miseries of a strife that our Lord came to make impossible.

How unremittingly Jesus laid emphasis on the fact that it is mercy that God wants of men! — not orthodox confessional worship, nor participation in the sacraments, nor

even sacrificial gifts to him, but kindness to one another. And if we seek for the attestation of the living energy of Jesus among men today we shall find it on every battlefield of the almost endless front, where the Red Cross is seeking to undo something of the horror of cruelty that the sword has just achieved. We shall find it, too, in every detention and prison camp, where his messengers are striving to bring cheer and uplift to the millions of the captive. What we have seen of war and peace in our short lifetime has been enough, not to make us doubt the worth of Christianity, but to make us draw closer to the Jesus Christ who will yet bring war to naught, and whose spirit and message are the very revelation of God's will for men and nations.

It is not so much against the lurid background of war that the present influence of Jesus appears. The forces that he set in motion, and in which his spirit still lives and moves among us, are visible in every relation of human life. By no means are they always the official activities of his Church, but their unfailing touchstone is that they are the direct outgrowth of fellowship with him. They are very far from being as widespread and effective as they ought to be, and as they would be were all Christian men disciples of Jesus in deed as well as name.

Yet they serve to illuminate, from a thousand different angles, the personality of him who went about in Galilee doing good, so long ago. We estimate him justly through those in whom his spirit has free course today.

We look with amazement at his transforming influence upon peoples who are the most brutish of human creatures — least susceptible to any uplifting forces because of inherited centuries of savagery and degradation. Here, e.g., are the tribes of West Coast negroes in the hinterland of Old Calabar, — well called the slum-dwellers among the negro tribes. They were bloodthirsty, cruel, superstitious and indescribably vicious and depraved. To them there came, not many years ago, the spirit of Christ incarnated in a young woman from a working home in Dundee — Mary Slessor. Not a woman of genius or an extraordinary person in any way, apart from her Christlike character, but one who had submitted herself whole-heartedly to the direction of the Master. She lived and walked among them for thirty years, reproducing imperfectly yet as best she could the ways and words of Jesus when he was among men. And with what result? The same sort of result that so astounded Darwin on the island of Tierra del Fuego. Her unfailing love actually

broke down the old reign of terror, under which no man's life was safe. The unending tribal warfare came to an end. The immemorial customs of atrocious cruelty were gradually laid aside. And first by ones and twos, and later by tens and scores, they came to ask that they also might be counted as the disciples of him who brought joy and peace to men through righteousness.

In all this we are face to face with more than the benign but unaided influence of one good woman. We have to do with a redeeming energy that is divinely potent and merciful; that can forgive sin and cleanse the soul and re-create the affections, making a new creature in the face of almost incalculable odds. It is the communicated energy of Jesus, after nineteen hundred years. As one observes it closely and sympathetically he is led to conclude that this transforming and almost miraculous energy of grace is not something that has filtered down from the Nazarene prophet through these many generations, but that it is a fresh and living force — potent and vital — because it is the directly imparted spirit and saving power of him who came to seek and to save the lost by love, and who said that he would be with his disciples to the end of time. It is as new as today's sunlight, because it comes from the heart of God, and in its fresh and

vivid power it is the witness that he is with us still.

We consider also the marvel — though it is a marvel so familiar in its general features as to be almost commonplace — of the fruitage of Jesus' life in the case of Miss Slessor herself. It is unmistakable that Jesus, when on earth, took peasant fishermen and, with their consent and cooperation, made them an intellectual and moral force that has not ceased until today. His fellowship made them great. And the ability to impart a divine fire, that transmutes selfish men into the inspired messengers of God, has not suffered through the ages.

Mary Slessor was a drunkard's child. At the age of eleven she was forced to become the bread-winner of the family. At fourteen she was an expert weaver in the mills of Dundee. Thousands like her, from homes of bitter poverty and wretchedness, have gone the way of their environment and succumbed to the forces of evil that were too strong for them. But he who was a good friend to tempted girls in Galilee so long ago drew her to himself, and to a way of strength and safety that his companionship alone could have made possible for her. By the time she had reached young womanhood she was a trusted worker among the rough boys and girls of the Dundee slums. She longed for a

life of service among those needier still, in the utter darkness of heathenism; and at twenty-eight she was sent out to the field of Calabar in West Africa.

She became a pioneer missionary among tribes not yet touched by the outermost fringe of civilization — whose character can be judged from the fact that their only imports were guns, rum and chains. There she lived for the most part quite alone, always in frail health and often racked with pain or helpless from prostrating illness. By sheer weight of character she made herself a name honored through all Nigeria, by government officials and traders as well as by the natives. She was "everybody's mother," and her name will be held in veneration through all that darkened region for many years to come. Her work has entered into the foundations of the Africa that is to be.

What are we to think of him who — if the clearest utterance of her own consciousness is to be trusted — wrought this work of power in and through Mary Slessor? We are all painfully familiar with the workings of untruth and feebleness and folly in human lives. We are surrounded on every hand by lives that are purposeless, apathetic, helpless to save themselves, and yet more helpless to bring anything of aid to others. That is the

natural fruit of living by wrong principles — the degeneration and impoverishment of life. But here, all about us, we see this transcendent power of creative and transforming life, springing from belief in Jesus Christ and daily conscious association with him. It replaces inertness and indifference with moral energy, and brings a divine beauty of human character where there had been the unloveliness of sullen resistance to the good.

Here, e. g., is a lad in college who is going wrong. What with his drinking and gambling and evil associations, he is living every day in defiance of his conscience, and has already grown morose and ill-tempered because of the inward division against himself. He is shirking his work and is in continual trouble with his professors. He has lost the power of close concentration upon any task, and is tormented with the knowledge that he is wasting his powers and bringing sorrow to those who love him best. Yet partly in defiance and still more in helplessness he goes on his way downward, struggling pitifully from time to time to save himself before it is too late, but powerless to change.

Such a man is brought vividly face to face with the offered help of a living Jesus Christ; and after a fierce inward strife determines, as he says, " to give Jesus Christ a chance in

his life." In that new strength he gives himself to God for better or for worse. And what a resurrection follows. We are not talking of religious theory or of any strange or rare experience, but of what every observant college man has had the chance to see. The evil habits fall away. The taste for forbidden things is somehow dried up at the source. The inward division ceases and the old moroseness and ill-humor give place to cheerfulness and a new spirit of good fellowship. His power of work returns, and he finds his college duties easy and agreeable where he had thought them impossible. He is a man given back to society; and to the anxious father and mother at home he is a lost son restored. And so far as consciousness can analyze the situation, it is Jesus Christ who has done this. His power has been vital enough, when appealed to, to reach the lad in the crisis of his need, to pluck his feet out of the miry clay and to set them on a rock.

This is what Jesus did once in Capernaum and Jericho. It is what he is doing today in every city and town of this new world. And what then shall we think of him, and of the worth of his claims, and the truth of his gospel? Is he who brings truth and honor to its perfect flower only an outworn doctrine of men, himself untrue? As a

matter of fact we measure his worth and truth by the reality of his present power to make a broken life worthy and faithful, and by that pragmatic measurement we find him infinitely good. Would we not cleave to such a Friend of men as that? Would we not trust his guidance in things of the spirit, without waiting for the final answer to all our doubts?

And if there are flaws in the pen and ink record of his life, there are no flaws in the testimony of this work before our eyes. It is no fruit of blundering or error that brings men accidentally to stumble into life abundant. We recognize it as part of a divine order of mercy and truth. And we believe from the heart that he spoke truth when he said that he came to bring life to men, and we believe that here in our own lifetime we see the fulfillment of his words.

The element in our civilization of today that cheers us most of all, in spite of every appearance to the contrary, is the fast growing spirit of brotherhood, that will not allow a conscientious man to look coldly or indifferently upon his neighbor's welfare. The demand for justice first of all, and then for something more than justice, in the relations between different classes and between capital and labor, is a part not only of awakening class consciousness, but of an awakening

response to the old, old teachings of Jesus. Millions of men in the past have read his story of the Good Samaritan with as honest a purpose to be true to its spirit as has any reformer of today. Yet how incredibly slow they were to perceive some of its most obvious implications. But in our day the quickened interest in the personality of Jesus has led to a far wider and more thoughtful study of his social teaching, and his spirit has gripped the hearts and consciences of men in such wise that there is a new vision among us of what the Kingdom of God on earth should be, and a new dedication to its service. The moral awakening has of course spread far beyond the limits of the professed followers of Jesus, yet this rebirth of hope for society is, at its inmost heart, the fruit of a spiritual fellowship with this Elder Brother of all men. As men and women actually receive and assimilate the life-spirit of Jesus, and turn to him in loyal discipleship, they become helpers and saviors of society, because they have felt in their own souls the power and wonder of self-sacrificing love. This is what we have seen in our own lifetime in thousandfold repetition, until it is as impossible for us to doubt it as to doubt the procession of the equinoxes.

Last of all in this fragmentary survey, one must give full weight to the fact that

even in this twentieth century our human nature finds in a life of thoroughgoing Christian discipleship its own completest satisfaction. In a world of order and reason this affords a "tremendous presumption" that such a life is in harmony with an actually existing world of reality. If the inspiration of Jesus were somehow wearing out as a life principle, if the motives centering in him were gradually growing pale and ineffective, leading men to weariness and disappointment as years multiply, it would justly raise doubt as to the abiding power of his spirit. But the opposite is the fact.

It is a characteristic of middle age, under ordinary conditions, that the enthusiasms of early years tend to grow pale and ineffectual, if not altogether to die out. The generous flame of a natural faith in God and man with which we may have started out has been dimmed by so many shocks of hard experience, that more and more we tend to protect ourselves from disappointment by trusting little and expecting less, and our high ideals of unselfish devotion are chilled into a commonplace acceptance of the present sorry scheme of things as more or less inevitable. How many there are whose once high faith in God's purpose and man's possibilities has died down into the "practical man's" tolerant indifference toward any

urgent or aggressive Christian effort. And how many more whose lives grow poor and disappointing as they feel themselves losing touch with the sources of any passionate devotion to any cause, however great.

It is the inseparable note of any genuine and living association with Jesus Christ that the springs of enthusiastic motive are kept fresh and living. One simply cannot share his spirit without being filled with a great purpose and a great expectation, that do not wear threadbare with the years. Other life motives are conspicuously inadequate. The passion for money, which seems to be the prevailing ambition in our own land, for all its fascination, most often leads anywhere but to contentment and strong peace of soul. The search for pleasure tragically soon becomes a heart-breaking weariness. Even the noblest ends can show no fruit of steadily deepening satisfaction such as the fellowship of Jesus bears. As A. C. Benson has recently said of Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who with his great open nature certainly "warmed both hands at the fire of life," "From the beginning of the world the persistent care for outward beauty has brought with it weariness and satiety of spirit." Could one find anywhere under heaven an honest and earnest disciple of Jesus to whom the multiplying years of endeavor to serve him have

brought only satiety and weariness? To any one who has known many followers of Jesus the anomaly is unthinkable. Human experience, with infinite repetition and variation, bears witness that he is still a spring of hope and life and joy to all who make him the Master of their lives.

All these things we have seen, year after year, for many years. Especially if fortune has been kind to us in throwing us with those whose chief interest in life is their unselfish devotion to the Kingdom of God, our whole horizon has been filled with the evidences of a redeeming energy, still working in our world in myriad ways of beneficence and power. This ever-widening stream of the most costly energy in life — the energy of love — leads back to Jesus Christ. Historically it leads back to him through weary centuries of alternating aspiration and disappointment; but experimentally it springs direct from him who is now, in our day, the revealer of God to men through living contact with our souls.

How can we then, who want the best in life, turn doubtfully away from Jesus Christ, because we cannot grasp the mystery of his infinite service to mankind? How can we do other than believe in him, even though our faith be so sharply hedged about with limitations that we fret ourselves against the

problems that we cannot answer? Judged by the present-day witness to his influence he is still what he once claimed to be, the Friend of Sinners and the great Minister to needy men. We need him, for ourselves and for the needy world that misunderstands him, beyond all expression. To let him go would be not only to lose the order and purpose from our lives, but to find ourselves abandoned to the harsh vicissitudes of later years with only mocking voices all about us, proclaiming moral chaos where we had looked for law and love.

So we believe in him. Not because of church or council or creed, not because we have been trained or bidden so to do, not even because we long for the comfort of such a faith, but because we cannot be our truest selves and not yield ourselves to his direction. Our faith is the fruit of our experience of ourselves and God, — it is our response to his voice in our own soul. And on it we would build further trust in God and in his ways, as our eyes may be opened to perceive their truth.

CHAPTER VIII

The Place of the Cross

BUT is this the whole story of the soul's instinctive response to Jesus Christ? Have we given full account of the compulsion that his personality lays upon our spirits? Manifestly we have not. The deepest element in the church's allegiance to its Master through all these years has merely been alluded to, simply because in our day it is the element likely to be last present in our thought.

It is not open to doubt that the ethical response to the divine beauty and power of Jesus' character is at the heart of the Christian experience, as it is at the center of faith. We make our choice of God through what we have seen of him in the life and teaching of his Son. So far we can see clearly. Perhaps if we were the children of our own generation alone we should be content with seeing only as far as this. But obviously we cannot be content, because such a summing up of the Christian experience in its response to Jesus Christ is so inadequate. We have not yet taken account of one of its most essential features, and, till we have done so, any faith,

or any life based on that faith, must be halting and incomplete.

The ethical choice of Jesus, because he presents the supreme moral ideal for human life, is certainly at the very foundation of Christianity. But there is a phase of Christian experience which is, as it were, distinct from this, though never separable from it. It is concerned with Jesus not as disciple with Teacher, but as lost men with a Saviour. It is not moral idealism that draws them to him, but the stress of bitter need; and humble gratitude for deliverance is the conscious beginning of the new life. The moral impulse is inseparably present, but the sense of need and rescue and mercy fills the foreground of consciousness.

All of Christian history, through nineteen hundred years, is filled and colored with experiences such as these. Even the great social and humanitarian movements have started from them. The New Testament has them ever in view, and our own age, strange as it seems to some of us who have led sheltered or bookish lives, is still as familiar with them, in every country under heaven, as was the early church. To many of our churches they would seem strange and out of date — out of harmony with the intellectual movement of our times. And, indeed, they are out of harmony with the

spirit of many of our churches, but obviously most harmonious still with the spirit of the Church of God.

The word Saviour is seldom heard from many of our pulpits of today. The thought of the rising generation is too absorbingly engrossed with other things. And yet it is undoubtedly around the facts of Saviourhood and salvation, and the passion of answering love that goes out to that mighty deliverer from sin, that the living aggressive Christianity of our day still centers. Even in the great social movements of our day, so far as they are actually dynamic, the inner forces are kept burning by nothing less than faith in the reality of redeeming love as the expression of God's attitude to his children.

The longer one lives, unless he is bound in the shallows of that popular superficial thinking which curiously deletes the intractable problems of personal sin from the field of its observation, the more is he compelled to make a stern effort to find at least some place in his faith and experience for all the world of reality that centers primarily about the cross of Christ, as the supreme revelation and expression of God's compassion and sorrow for his children's sin. We may meet with ill success. But any attempt to understand the religious life as a whole demands

that we should not evade this, its profoundest and most insistent concern.

The industrial problems that now demand the utmost concentration of Christian thought and purpose are for the most part the outgrowth of the last one hundred years, and perhaps in another hundred years will cease to hold their present place of prominence. But the old distress of helplessness in the face of sensuality and greed and pride, the old, old despair of a heart averse to God and his ways, coupled with the longing for deliverance and restoration, and the old joyous answer of a life's devotion to the Friend of sinners who sought out and saved the one ready to perish, — these currents of fear and wretchedness, of faith and joy and love, will run as strong a thousand years from now as ever they did when the churches of Rome and Corinth first held out the new hope to hopeless men. The shame and guilt of being inextricably entangled by evil affection with what is hateful to God is a typical human experience that seems not to alter very much from age to age, however much this complacent generation may have forgotten it. The fact that the prayer of the publican seldom occurs to our minds nowadays, much less rises to our lips, does not necessarily mean that our age has less need of the mercy of God than any other; it may

only mean that we have grown strangely insensible to our tragic misuse of life and of its opportunities.

In any analysis of the human response to the personality of Jesus, it is necessary to take thoughtful account of this further element — the element of response to his death as the culmination of his work of redemption for his people. Even the inner circle of faith's defence would be seriously weakened if that constraining appeal to trust and confidence were withdrawn. If belief in Jesus is, indeed, faith's foundation, we should recognize with fullest sympathy how compelling and how satisfying human experience has found that belief to be in the fullness of its New Testament content.

We shall do well to face clearly at the outset the fact that it is well-nigh impossible for our own generation to enter sympathetically into the profound teaching of Paul in this respect, or even into the experience of the men and women of New England, a hundred years ago. No age can maintain an uninterrupted appreciation of the whole range of religious truth, even so far as the truth is known to it. Under varying conditions, material, intellectual and moral, one phase of truth after another has its turn in the foreground of thought and experience, and is then crowded into the background by

sheer force of reaction under changed environment. And it is beyond question that our own generation, after an age in which the death of Christ and its theological implications were forced into an unnatural and often mechanical prominence, has swung to the full opposite extreme; so that religiously minded young people of our day have largely ceased even to think about that which was the central factor of the Christian life in the experience of their grandparents.

Any one who knows at first-hand the student body of our country, with its eager idealism and generous appreciation for any spiritual message that seems to them to bear the stamp of reality, knows also how blankly it often listens to any direct presentation of the death of Christ or the work of the atonement. Exceptional men will have a different experience. But most speakers to college audiences know what it is to see the attitude of keen responsiveness to the ethical and social appeal of Jesus change almost instantly to a look of puzzled uncertainty or indifference when the subject is turned to his offering of himself to save men from sin. It is as though a palpable curtain fell between speaker and audience, when the thought passed out of the realm in which they were living and thinking into what they felt was merely doctrinal and

— to them at least — unreal. This would perhaps not be true in the case of the avowedly evangelistic address, or in times of special spiritual interest, for which much heart preparation had been made; neither is it a wholesome condition nor one for which we need make apology. But it tells its own story of the actual spiritual experience of sincere and earnest minds in the prevailing atmosphere of our schools.

It is of little use to preach doctrines that for any reason find no echo in the experience of the hearers, or to find fault with the moral honesty of those who unconsciously reflect the intellectual limitations of their own time. Yet it will not always be as it is today. And even meanwhile it is a good thing to be engrossed in carrying the Master's teaching into its social applications, and the time is sure to come when men will inquire again with the old fervor wherein lies the power of the gospel that they have been applying for society's regeneration.

The faith of today is true faith and fruitful, as was that of the earliest followers of Jesus, who never reflected whither it was leading them or what was the inner explanation of its hold upon their lives. But reflection must come with years — the implicit must be worked out into the explicit — and neither our age nor any other will ever rest

content with a devotion to Jesus Christ that does not seek to answer the profoundest inquiries that can be brought as to its origin and significance. We do not grow less solicitous about reality as we grow older; rather do we become more earnestly and wistfully eager to find out where the genuine sources of power and comfort in religion lie. And the fact that the typical reading and thinking public of our day is preoccupied with the practical uses of Christian truth, rather than with the deep springs of that truth itself, cannot long blind us to the unchanging dynamic realities that have in fact made Christianity a world religion.

How evident it grows, as life goes on and our insight into its needs increases, that this dynamic is not found where we have sometimes half believed it was. It is not in the fact that its founder is the perfect man who realizes our ideal for all humanity, or that it reveals the highest ethical system known, or even that it affords the clearest vision of God; but that, through and through, it is surcharged with redemptive power. Its message is — however old-fashioned it may sound — a glad tidings of salvation; it is a gospel of redemption and restoration. And something more than this is clearly to be seen. Many a religion has started with the ardent wish to be redemptive, but has failed for

lack of power. The gospel of Jesus has the power — because it alone tells of a redemption based on infinite love, suffering for human sin. It tells of One who pays the costly price of infinite effort and sorrow to achieve the end that no conceivable lesser sacrifice could bring to pass.

Just here it would seem to some that we are running out of the region of reality and actual experience into the forsaken field of a theology that baffles human understanding. But are we outrunning even our common human experience of the cost and method of moral redemption as we see it operating in lives about us? To be sure, the divine method of salvation must have its Godward side, reaching out into mysteries we cannot fathom, as must every truth where it impinges on the infinite. But this only reassures our reason. For were God's plan of love and the resources of its power so shallow as to lie all open to our comprehension, we should be assured that they were indeed limited and of merely finite efficacy. It is possible for our speculation and even our formulated theology to press out into this region of the absolute, where words and metaphors chiefly mock us by their inadequacy. But we of today have little taste for such adventure. Nor can this effort to fathom the unfathomable be of such im-

portance as good men have sometimes thought; for we are sure that the requirements of Jesus upon his disciples' faith were of a notable matter-of-fact-ness and simplicity.

Even within the region of our common experience of life, however, lies this simple yet always startling fact of redemption through love that suffers for another's sin. And its plainest workings open to us strange depths of reality and power, that unmistakably underlie also the life and death of Jesus, and that have caught and held, and will forever hold, the reverent wonder and passionate gratitude of humanity.

It is only as life goes on and our experience of men widens, that we come to understand how difficult a thing it is, and how costly of effort and sacrifice, to recover a soul that has gone wrong. Multitudes of people never do discover how difficult a thing it is, for the simple reason that they have never tried. They satisfy themselves with all sorts of theories as to how base elements in human nature may be transformed into noble ones, without cost to any one of personal love or painful sacrifice. It is to be done by medical or surgical treatment, or by better education, or shorter work hours, or improved tenements, or the suppression of the saloon, or a new economic system, or by one or another

of multifarious humanitarian readjustments, which are to accomplish easily and naturally and on a wide scale the moral uplift of the people.

If we have ever seriously tried to reach even a single life, weakened in will and poisoned in spirit by vicious indulgence, embittered and defiant toward all that stands for law and moral restraint, we have had some insight into the almost insurmountable difficulty of bringing spiritual renewal to one who refuses it, or recreating the heart of one whose pleasures are rooted in evil affection. Men are always rediscovering the fact — as Thomas Mott Osborne has recently brought it into prominence again — that nothing but love can do this work, and, even then, only at its own personal cost and sacrifice. Money cannot purchase it. Neither the most perfect organization nor the most highly paid officials can be depended on to secure it. It goes without saying that there are many forms of social amelioration that are efficient aids, and that we are bound for every reason to support them to the best of our capacity. But in the last analysis the deep needs of the individual soul, the needs which blind and bewilder and ultimately destroy, are only to be relieved by love. And however we may carp at individualism, the last stage of social progress, like its first,

will still be dealing with the problem of individual need and individual redemption.

Perhaps most men who have reached middle age have tried their hand once or twice at "reclaiming" some one who only half desired to be reclaimed. We were willing to give a certain amount of time and money and patience in the effort, so long as it did not interfere with our business or the orderly routine of life. But the chances are that we did not succeed, because our patience did not hold out. Possibly we felt that we were being deceived or that the man was not rightly keeping his promises, or that his will was too weak; but in any case our compassion was not strong enough to stand the strain, and we gave up the attempt as unfortunately hopeless. We had not much love to go upon, and were pathetically unable to pay the price demanded, of an unbounded sympathy and forgiving patience.

It would do us all good if we could look in from time to time at any of the numberless city missions to lost men, where this work of rescue from the nethermost depths of need is continually going on. It is a revelation of what compassion means. It would remind some of us of what God's love must have had to bear with us. Sam Hadley, who took over the work of Jerry McAuley's mission on Water Street, was asked how

often they took a man back who had disappointed them. "We never give a man up in Water Street," was the reply. The loving sympathy has to be almost inexhaustible to carry out that sort of life-saving. It must bear with a weak will and a moral fiber that seems to have rotted away, until seventy times seven. But often it is in the case of those who seemed to be hopelessly weak or hopelessly perverse, that the finest results of a firm Christian character have been secured. But at a price far beyond the power of most of us to pay. We care too much for our own selves, our own comfort, or — as we might say — our own self-respect, to follow such broken lives for weeks and months of unfailing prayer and help and brotherly love. The pain and shame of their degradation would actually invade our life and spoil our peace of mind if we took them so completely on our hearts. That of course is not to be expected. We are loth to learn the lesson of the words,

"Measure thy life by loss instead of gain,
Not by wine drunk but by the wine poured forth,
For love's strength standeth in love's sacrifice."

It is by slow degrees that we come to see and to believe that it is only by such love, actually suffering with another's wretchedness, that any great deliverance is wrought.

The working of this principle is perhaps most clearly seen in the case of mother and son. The boy is wayward. He goes out into the world to live a life that sears his mother's heart to think upon. Little by little his friends leave him, unable to do more for him, or to bear with the disgrace with which he has clothed himself. But his mother suffers with him still. It writes deep lines upon her face, but she cannot give him up or cease to follow him with her prayer and love. And in the end, it may even be after she has died, her love and sorrow bring him back to righteousness. Mission workers have seen this repeated times almost past numbering. She has patiently borne the pain that should have been his, and in so doing has redeemed his soul.

The little that we see and know of what great love can do in human relationships, if it is willing to pay the cost of suffering, leads our thought up to God. What would he be likely to do, out of his infinite compassion for his children's sin and shame? A poor, erring, earthly father like David, long ago, could cry out in an agony of unavailing longing, "Would God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son." Many a father and mother would lay down life in utter gladness, could it bring back a lost son

or daughter. How far would God go to bring home in penitence and joy the distressed children of His household?

The question must have been one on which Jesus pondered with intensest feeling as a boy and a young man. As his attention came to be more and more riveted by that majestic picture of the suffering servant in Isaiah, the wonder must have grown upon him whether that sorrowful destiny was to be his. If he was to be the servant and deliverer of his unwilling people, must his way lead through that desolation of spirit? Did such a vocation demand such a sacrifice? Could he not be his people's teacher and healer and helper there among his own sunny hillsides of Galilee, at a less cost than this? It is plainly evident that, before the end, Jesus fully accepted for himself that dread vocation of love. He must needs be despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. Naturally he did not speak much of it. There was no ear from which he could expect any response of intelligence or of sympathy. But he accepted for himself the solemn necessity, if he was to carry out his Father's will.

In that deathless story he told of the wastrel son, returning home after he had reached the end of the passage, he simply said that the father ran to meet the returning

boy, and fell on his neck and kissed him. How he ran to meet him, and what it meant to him of mingled sorrow and gladness, we read in the life and death of Jesus. How the father had suffered in the son's wrong-doing and misery, and at what cost his love won the final victory, we partly understand as we remember how Jesus gave himself for his friends.

No doubt, in certain moods, this tragic element in the relation of God to men does not appeal to any sense of need within us. When the tides of strength and self-confidence run strong and nothing disturbs our pleasant sense of moral security, it may even seem to us "foolishness," as it has to so many from the first days till now. But there will always be those who recognize instinctively its divine reasonableness in such a world as this, and who turn to it with abandonment of faith and longing. They are our brothers and sisters who are actually sinking in the depths, and who have reached the place of no hope.

Like that young woman in New York City who was met several years ago coming up out of one of those underground cellars in the slums; body and soul alike at the point of death from her brief lifetime of unbridled dissipation, — as pitiful a bit of human wreckage as was ever cast up by the waves of

that great sea of wickedness. Long past the point of despair, she was met by the story of a Saviour who gave himself for such sin as hers. What it meant to her, more than one great audience in New York heard, in after days of the three years that remained to her of life, and heard with unconcealed tears upon their faces, as she poured out that story of love unto death that had reached across the centuries to her agony of need.

But obviously it was not for the very wicked only that Jesus gave himself — for such manifestly lost souls as drift into a present-day mission in our slums. Indeed he seemed to find it more difficult to reach the heart of the highly respectable classes, in their pride and complacency and selfishness. He gave himself for such men as Thomas and Peter and John, — partly good and partly bad, yet distressingly weak and ignorant of their Father's will. He brought to them the revelation of what God's love is really like, and of what it would suffer to win them wholly away from sin, as true sons of the holy God.

It is too much for us to grasp; it is beyond our comprehension, as infinite love must infinitely outrun our experience of what human love can undertake and accomplish. But more than when we were young people we feel that the reality of such a love unto

the uttermost must have a place in the divine plan. It must needs be there, in view of our bitter need. Indeed, if we had not the record of Jesus' death, we should have to imagine some unrevealed wonder of divine effort and sacrifice, in the presence of this world's extremity. We have seen and felt too much of the costliness of redemption to suppose that this world's waywardness is to be lightly turned to the penitent obedience of love.

The generation that follows ours, after the Great War is over, will not find it so hard as we have done to enter into this solemn unwelcome truth of sacrifice even unto death for a great end. Innumerable homes will have made the last and bitterest renunciation that human hearts can face, for a high and wholly impersonal cause. If on a hundred battlefields the commonest of men have risen to a devotion of sacrifice sealed with their life-blood, shall we be too soft and delicate to think or speak of what our Lord would do to establish his peace and righteousness in a kingdom of human hearts, wide as the universe and without end?

And so, although we may be quite unable to enter into the rapturous experience of Paul, we also are bound to Jesus by something more than the tie of moral idealism. He loved us and gave himself for us. The chastisement of our peace was upon him and

by his stripes we are healed. We have never been "lost men" — we may never have been so much as in sight of any extremity of need. The redeeming work began, for us, far back of our personal experience — generations back. We had from infancy "the heritage of those that fear his name." But it is still that revelation of infinite love that came by Jesus Christ — love unto death that we might be freed from sin — to which we owe all we have and are. He is our Saviour, though often we forget it. We believe in Jesus, not only because all we know of good centers in him, but because this goodness has been for us. We trust him not only as we trust in the good, the beautiful, and the true, but as the one who, having begun a good work in us, is able to save unto the uttermost.

For all these reasons that we have been considering we believe in Jesus Christ. However the currents of critical discussion may eddy to and fro, and whatever may be the popular philosophy of religion among the wise and prudent, we are drawn by an irresistible compulsion to cleave to him in life and death. Many things may be clouded to our apprehension, and the wavering of our belief may cause us heavy disappointment; but that Jesus Christ is the Master to whom we would utterly submit our lives, so far as

our stubborn self-love permits, we can have no shadow of doubt. It is not only because all those qualities of soul which we most revere are summed up in him, and because we find in him a living source of redeeming energy, but because there is in us that which cries out for him, and finds satisfaction only in the eternal love which he revealed and which was in him incarnate.

To whom else shall we go? His truth and power have met the most searching tests that our soul, in its struggle for self-preservation, knows how to apply. And it is out of this stormy experience of the spirit that we come to take his faith as our faith, satisfied that the words of eternal life are with him.

Part II
THE OUTLOOK OF FAITH

CHAPTER IX

The Fact of God

WHAT then is the outlook on life, when life is two-thirds done, of the one who believes in Jesus? The cheery optimism of youthful high spirits and inexperience is likely to have been slain beyond recovery long before that age is reached. And if life now is to be bright with hope, it must be for different reasons and in the face of greater obstacles than those we took most account of years ago. It is the purpose of the following chapters to set forth the unabashed optimism of the man who looks forward and upward in the faith of Jesus, in spite of all that man or Nature can offer to daunt his courage.

It was so kindly a spirit as Mark Twain who said " The man who isn't a pessimist is a fool." And one who lived the simple life so near to Nature as did the naturalist, Richard Jefferies, gave it as his judgment on all human striving, that " virtue, humanity, the best and most beautiful conduct, is wholly in vain. . . . Lives spent in doing good have been lives nobly wasted." One might multiply such characteristic utterances of our time a hundredfold, running the whole

gamut of disillusionment and despondency — some pathetically wistful, some actively vicious. They are the voices that are ever in our ears, to which inner suggestions of fear and weakness are but too ready to respond.

Nevertheless, it is to be noted that without exception they are from those who give no credence to the life and message of Jesus. What we see as we look into the present or future depends on whether we are standing on low ground or on the heights. To stand with Jesus is to stand in a high place, from which vision is least impeded. And those who believe in him have a far different witness to bear from those who do not, simply because it is through his eyes that they look out upon the realities of heaven and earth. What these realities are, which smite down fear and sternly forbid anxiety, which distil joy and refresh with strength, we have now to consider; and to consider from the vantage point of those who have tested them, and tested life by them, through the vicissitudes of many years.

There is only one reality which could possibly be placed first in the experience and faith of Jesus — the fact of God. And as we take the faith of Jesus as our own, we take this fact also as one of ultimate reality, which encompasses us at every footstep of our way

from birth to death, and onward into the unknown. Life may be clouded and stormy, as it was with Jesus, but over it all lies the benediction of God's presence, like the rainbow of promise that one's heart leaps up to see. Whatever else there is that is real to us, and that absorbs our attention as we voyage onward through the years, this should be most real and most engrossing. It is the primary fact of consequence in all our life career. Nothing else will ever confront us with such richness of joy or such depth of obligation. With Jesus, it seems not to have been so much an article of faith as a fact of consciousness, that never failed him night or day. He never argued for it any more than he argued for the sunlight; he lived in it and by it. It made him what he was; just as it should make us widely different from what we would be were this reality wanting in our lives.

Obviously, such a faith is life's supreme possession. As children, we took it for granted, as the starting point for anything that could be called religion. It was a fact that had to be accepted whether agreeable or not; and perhaps more often than not it was a trifle unwelcome, as adding one more eye, and a sleepless one, to those that were already watching us. But now, as loneliness or the fear of it begins to cast its shadow over

us, we know that to be watched in love is a joy that money cannot buy, and for which our hearts hunger beyond expression. And to be followed by a thoughtful love, of an almighty energy that cannot fail, is a blessing that transcends every other blessing known to man. A quiet confidence in this undying presence of our Father is the goal of faith and its supreme achievement, rather than its easy beginning.

It is reassuring to remember that our need and our longing in this respect are not peculiar to us, as though we were somehow weaker or more credulous than our fellows, or as though we had the "religious temperament" that seeks its gratification in attempted converse with the unseen. Jesus simply brought into the light of common day the eternal reality for which men have been groping so far back as we know anything of mankind. Men have always coveted the precious metals, and the workings of their abandoned gold and silver mines are found scattered up and down the earth wherever powerful civilizations have had their home; but the ruins of their temples, in what today are pathless jungles or sand-drifted deserts, tell of something they coveted far more than gold, and for which they sought with insatiable eagerness — the presence and favor of the unseen God. If then we think of him

with wishful desire that he would somehow make himself better known to us, we are but revealing our kinship with the great brotherhood of humanity, who have never been ashamed or afraid to admit their need of him. Jesus made known to us the reasons why this hunger lies so deep, — simply because, in very fact, God made us for himself and our hearts are restless till they rest in him.

All of us are more or less intimidated by the waves of scepticism that roll over society from time to time, putting the spiritual insight of a Voltaire or a Haeckel before that of Jesus. The tide of agnosticism that set in fifty years ago, following the scientific researches of Darwin and his contemporaries, submerged confidence in Jesus on the part of so many in our time that we tend to forget how universal and how ineradicable is this immemorial instinct for God. We need, at such a juncture, to remind ourselves that the sense of God, like every most sensitive and highly developed capacity of the human spirit, can be easily dulled and even atrophied. Jesus made this plain, from a single angle, when he said, " The pure in heart shall see God." Selfish or sensual indulgence will somehow make the fact of God grow dim and unreal, until arguments spring up on every side to show the unreasonableness of trust in him. As someone has said, in

words that burn like fire, "The impure shall see all, except God." It is clear then, at the outset, that one's moral condition directly affects the power by which he discerns those realities that lay so open to the view of Jesus.

But quite apart from any conscious moral failing, our capacity for faith seems to wax or wane with the vigor and health of our spiritual life. Professor Tyndall is quoted as saying, apropos of this haunting tendency to materialistic atheism, "I have noticed, during years of self-observation, that it is not in the hours of clearness and vigor that this doctrine commends itself to my mind; for in the presence of stronger and healthier thought it ever dissolves and disappears, as offering no solution to the mystery in which we dwell and of which we form a part." There can be few persons who have been hounded by persistent doubt, but could confirm the truth of Professor Tyndall's words. As young people, we are apt to be afraid of our best instincts, distrusting their right to be heard and half fearing that they tempt us from the stern logic of the intellect; but as we grow older we come to know them better and to trust in their authority.

Furthermore, alas that it should be true! mere preoccupation with work will deaden and stifle any of the most highly specialized

capacities of our nature. Whether in the study, or physical laboratory, or business office, a man can become so absorbed, so indurated, in his persistent occupation, as to seem to have no consciousness left him of things unseen, nor any sense of need for them at all. It is to be remembered also, that our capacities and appetites reach far deeper than the consciousness of our common hours would plainly tell, in days of routine activity and contentment. One wonders how many of the men and women of our generation, under the outward appearance of intellectual contentment with agnosticism, are genuinely athirst for God.

There is a passage of singular interest in the life of John Addington Symonds, the Oxford scholar and historian of the Italian renaissance. He was in some respects a typical product of his time, — a man of the highest culture, a lover alike of convivial society and of all that is beautiful in art, but a confirmed sceptic in things religious. He made no attempt, however, to conceal his restless desire for something more satisfying than he had found. It chanced that once, in his later years, he had occasion to undergo chloroform anæsthesia for some trifling surgical operation, and that under the influence of the drug the veil of doubt fell away, as it were, from before his eyes. He

writes of the incident as follows: "Suddenly my soul became aware of God, who was manifestly dealing with me. . . . I felt him saying: 'I led you, I guided you; I have suffered you to feel sin and madness, to ache and be abandoned, in order that now you might know and gladly greet me.' I cannot describe the ecstasy I felt. Then, as I gradually awoke . . . the old sense of my relation to the world began to return, the new sense of my relation to God began to fade. I suddenly leaped to my feet and shrieked out, 'It is too horrible,' — meaning that I could not bear this disillusionment. Then I flung myself on the ground and woke, calling out, 'Why did you not kill me? Why would you not let me die?' Is it possible that the inner sense of reality was not a delusion but an actual experience? It is possible that I felt in that moment what saints have felt, the undemonstrable but irrefragable certainty of God."

It would be easy to argue too much from this singular experience. It shows in striking fashion, however, how deep was the stifled hunger of his nature for that which he rejected. And it is not wholly unreasonable to believe that, under the unaccustomed release of anæsthesia, the subconscious nature of the man welled up for a moment into victorious

consciousness, and that in that brief tantalizing vision, fading instantly, he saw the eternally abiding truth.[1]

The same experience has come in a different form to tens of thousands of the men who have been called to serve at the front in the Great War. They have suddenly found that their previous convictions have not taken account of the greater realities that underlie life and death, and have turned to God, not in a moment of "anxiety religion," not in the fear of death or to safeguard a possible future, but as children just awakened to their father's presence, who needed his blessing and who owed him a loyalty and love of which heretofore they had never thought.

Even those who have looked on have wakened to the fact that a world in which God is not, is a world impossible. Witness that touching saying of the noted French author and academician, Henry Lavedan, who heretofore had only ridicule for those who pretended to faith in God. In his recent confession, published throughout France,

[1] One is vividly reminded of the closing stanza of Thompson's "The Hound of Heaven":

> "That voice is round me like a bursting sea: . . . . .
> 'Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
> I am He whom thou seekest!
> Thou dravest *love* from thee,
> Who dravest me.'"

are these closing words: "How hard it is in this national cemetery to be an atheist! I cannot. I have deceived myself and you — you who have read my books and sung my songs. It was an insane delusion, a fearful dream. France, France! turn back to faith, to the most beautiful days. To give up God would be to lose all. I do not know whether I shall live in the morning, but this must I now say to my friends, . . . 'Lavedan does not dare to die as an atheist!' Hell does not terrify me, but the thought presses upon me — a God lives and I stand far from him. My soul shall rejoice if I can experience the hour when upon my knees I can say: . . . 'I believe in God! I believe! I believe!' This word is the morning song of humanity. For him who does not know it, night remains."

Surely we have no reason to let timidity shake our faith in the clear-sightedness of Jesus, as though only he and we were believers in God, and all the wise world were passing by on the other side. The man who thousands of years ago cried out, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God," was as much our own brother in experience as though he spoke out of the midst of this very year of grace — and war. And he who said, "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee,

Lord, hear my voice," might have been own comrade to the men who have lain wounded on the battlefields of Flanders. They and we alike are but experiencing what Jesus felt, when he left the village inns before daybreak that alone in the quiet dark he might talk with God.

It needs no reflection to perceive how profoundly such a faith must affect life at every turn. As the desert sun searches out with its warmth and light every crevice and cranny of the deep canyons in the mountains so this belief reaches to one's every thought and feeling and action, in any conceivable situation or emergency.

Here is the reality that makes faith in God at once so inconvenient and unpopular in any easy-going society. If one could secure its benefits without running the risk of its intrusiveness, perhaps all men would welcome it. But no one may deceive himself at this point. Men instinctively turn away from a God whose presence would destroy their peace of mind. His interference with their business and pleasure would be intolerable. If such a one as he were to scrutinize their actions from day to day, assuming the right to remould their life according to his will, life, they think, would be an insupportable burden.

And so we come to understand why it is

that the world as we know it is by no means eager to accept the faith of Jesus. Our age has grown into the habit of eulogizing human nature, and apologizing for its shortcomings, until the public is half persuaded that men only need to have the essential truths of religion presented unencumbered, to accept them willingly. Surely, we have had little acquaintance with society as it really is if we have not recognized the intense hostility to this central teaching of Jesus, on the part of innumerable men and women of every class. Their lives would be turned upside down by the continual intrusion of the righteousness and love of God. If one has ever seen or felt the almost demoniacal hatred felt by those who pander to evil passions toward any who would interfere with the organization of their business, he has realized how men and women determined on wrong-doing feel toward a holy God who would thwart their purpose. They want no such heavenly Father. As Jonathan Edwards used to say to certain of his day, they would kill God if they could. We need be under no illusion as to the inconvenience and unpopularity of this faith in God, save as one desires, at his best and deepest, the triumph of God's will. We do not welcome antagonistic wills in places of authority, and the will of God is clean and true and righteous al-

together. Only if our heart is right does it leap up with gladness to know it is the righteous God who has made us for himself, and who shall yet triumph over all in our affections that resists him.

As the fact of God becomes more real to us, two things that were ever present to the mind of Jesus concerning his Father become of necessity more vivid and significant to us also. First of all in his consciousness, against the dark background of human sin was the glory of the majesty of God's holiness. It is the God of eternal righteousness in whom we live and move and have our being. His righteousness is like the great mountains. Justice and judgment are the habitation of his throne. It is of no sort of use, then, for us to make headway in life by means of unworthy or unscrupulous methods, as so many do in politics, in business, and in their professions. Any such steps, however outwardly successful, will have to be retraced in shame and sorrow. There is no way out or through by such methods. Because this is God's world, such wilful ambitions can only lead to ultimate confusion and failure. All gains achieved in other ways than godly ways are losses, and must leave us poorer in the end.

These things may be obvious to say, but they are the hardest things in the world to

believe. Were they realized for a day only, they would transform society. Most men seem to believe that if they only push hard enough, and cleverly enough, they will win life's prizes. We forget that God rules, and that in his hands the masterful man and the man of genius for leadership are utterly subject to his righteous law, even though he were a king of men, with millions to do his bidding. "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death," because it is righteousness that is on the throne to all eternity.

It gives a solemn majesty to life to be assured that only truth and honor and justice have any chance of ultimate success. How well we know, e.g., the type of journalist or politician who seeks his party's gain by unscrupulousness in argument, by misrepresentation and the stirring up of racial and sectional hatred, and all the sinister selfish methods of pretentious patriotism. His is a figure all too common. Yet how completely all this would sink into contempt if all believed that the honorable ways of God are the only ways that can lead to national welfare and private happiness and content. As pushing men once said in kingdoms now dead and forgotten, "Jehovah will not do good, neither will he do evil." He is not a factor in the case, men think. The size of

the enemy's army, or the length of the opponent's purse, or the cleverness of the opposing lawyer, all these are to be considered; but that the righteousness of one so unreal and far away as God should be seriously taken into account does not occur to them.

Even Jesus was tempted to believe that the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them could somehow be won on easier terms than those that seemed to be of God. Something whispered in his ear and told him so. But it was a lie. Still it is a lie, — though every newspaper should echo it. The glory that is to be had by parting company with the righteous and compassionate God, whether for rulers or statesmen or common people like ourselves, is glory that will presently sink down like grass in the fire and be forgotten. We shall have wasted our ambitions and our struggles, because we forgot that this is God's world and that his righteousness is the law of all human welfare. To one who believes in Jesus this poor world is, in spite of all, a noble stage on which to play our part, because it is our Father's world and the dignity and glory of his great plans run through it all. He will not fail nor be discouraged till he has set judgment in the earth.

A second fact, self-evident to the mind of

Jesus and of immeasurable concern to us, was the Father's claim upon his children. Because God is what He is, there is an eternal fitness and obligation that men should be lovingly loyal to him. The most reassuring and uplifting utterance that ever fell from the lips of Jesus was his endorsement and renewal of the ancient command, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and with all thy strength." As life goes on, one comes to look upon this saying not so much as a command as a revelation of the glory of human nature. It is the royal charter of human nobility. It confirms, as no mere affirmation could, the fact that we are the sons and daughters of the Most High.

Often we are overawed by the vastness of the material universe as it is unfolded by modern science. We seem lost in the infinite labyrinth of space and time, and the sport of blind forces too vast for human comprehension. We are like the ephemera whose life is bounded by a summer day. We may even find it hard to take seriously our life and its microscopic interests, unnoticeable amid the swarming life of ages. And if we are trivial in our own eyes, how much more in the eyes of the Almighty With such thoughts we tend to grow yet more weak and cowardly

and selfish, and the animal in us surges up to take control.

But in the presence of Jesus we right ourselves as a vessel rights itself after a dangerous sea. We cannot face his calm dignity as a son of God among many brethren, or hear his call on us for filial loyalty to our Father in heaven, without recovery from panic fear. We may not wholly understand. We cannot grasp the marvel of an earthly life linked in an imperishable kinship of love with the Eternal Spirit. Nevertheless, if we hold to any shred of confidence in Jesus, we cannot doubt our heavenly lineage. Had he argued for it, as though it were open to denial, the force of his words would hardly have been so strong. But he confronts us with what he declares to be the primary obligation of the human spirit, and lo and behold! it is nothing less than filial response to a Father's love.

Scribe and Pharisee, publican and harlot, leper and criminal, on all alike he binds the burden of the first commandment, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart." It is not only those who are born again who are ennobled with this royal command of grace. Bushman and Hottentot and savage slave, Christian philosopher and savant, all are comprehended under its sublime constraint. It is as wide as the human

race. It proclaims us of absolute worth to God. Only love can claim love. And in the dark and cloudy day, when the world seems too heartless to hold any gospel worth the hearing, we take refuge and courage again in this first and great commandment, that Jesus must have dwelt upon with gladness.

One of the popular endeavors of our day is the attempt to pare away and whittle down the requirements of religion until only so much is left as all mankind can unite upon without serious objection. But pare and whittle as we will, if we at all believe in Jesus, our utmost ingenuity in refining away the uncompromising features of the creeds leaves still unaffected this stark uncompromising demand for what is hardest of all things to render — a genuine heart loyalty to the holy will of God. Given this, all good things of character will follow. But a less searching creed will not answer.

Probably it is not best to inquire too curiously of ourselves how far we are rendering this genuine heart affection to our Father in heaven. The inquiry is too baffling and unfruitful. We can easily see that Paul and Augustine and Saint Teresa and Thomas à Kempis truly loved God with a passionate devotion. We may have hoped, in earlier days, that our experience, too, might some-

what follow after theirs. Only gradually does it dawn upon us that men and women of ordinary temperament can hardly hope to reproduce the experiences of those ardent souls who had a preëminent genius for religion. We cannot justly expect to see the mystical glories that they saw, or to duplicate their rapture in the sight; any more than we can see in a painting what lies open to the artist eye of a Ruskin or Rossetti. A few fortunate souls seem to have a natural gift for loving. Unconscious of self, sympathetically conscious of others, demonstrative, and able easily to express their deepest feeling, they brighten the world through which they go. But most of us who belong to the more phlegmatic northern races are staid, practical folk, unemotional, undemonstrative, clumsy to discern and still clumsier to express what is dearest or most sacred to our thought. We shall go limping a little all our life through the most holy places, because our spirits are not as refined as they should be of self-consciousness and arid intellectualism and worldly caution — because we are what we are, by temperament and training. And yet, it is to such unemotional and severely practical people that this command is given, to love God with all the soul.

There is no guage for feeling except action, and by this alone can we judge ourselves

or others with safety. As Professor James of Harvard has said, "Act faithfully, and you have faith, no matter how cold and dubious you feel." We must even let our feelings go at times, so little do they seem under our control. But as the same great psychologist has told us, "By regulating the action, which is under the more direct control of the will, we can indirectly regulate the feeling, which is not." He who would love God has this plain guidance, that he should loyally seek to do God's will. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me," said Jesus. Many a man must win through the Christian life with not much more glow of emotion than comes from faithfully performing the daily routine of domestic and civic duty. Yet perhaps it is to some of these plodding, unpretentious souls that it will be said in that day "He hath loved much."

This, then, is what we see first of all as we look out across the years. Not the tragedy of millions of men swaying backward and forward in the agony of mortal strife, not the endless discord of social classes, nor the warring of insensate natural forces upon human happiness, nor any of the harsh realities that make men bitter or despondent. But first of all, and last of all also, we see God present in his world. This is the endless

horizon that encircles all of life we shall ever know. Where God is, there is hope, and pessimism cannot come. Even though earthquake should topple all of our little world into ruin, leaving us too stunned and dazed to have any consciousness of God remaining, we should presently awake to find ourselves in the hollow of his hand. It is not our faith that is imperishable, but his loving kindness. Yet even in our weakness we may rise to the moral grandeur of that ancient cry of triumph out of the storm,

> "Though the fig-tree shall not flourish,
> Neither shall fruit be in the vines;
> The labor of the olive shall fail,
> And the fields shall yield no food;
> The flock shall be cut off from the fold,
> And there shall be no herd in the stalls;
> Yet I will rejoice in Jehovah,
> I will joy in the God of my salvation." [1]

[1] Hab. 3 : 17, 18.

CHAPTER X

The Divine Outlook on Man

AS for the outlook of Jesus upon the world of men, whose ill-will cost him his life, it may be summed up in one golden word — love. And here even the best among us measurably part company with him. In spite of our awakened social consciousness and our eager philanthropies, we are compelled to recognize that human sympathies lag far behind the divine. At no point does the infinite more gloriously transcend the finite than at this, of love for the unlovely. Whatever may be our faith, we are obliged to confess, more sorrowfully as years go on, that our thoughts are not as his thoughts or our ways as his ways. Here and there our sympathies may be deeply engaged and we give ourselves for others' welfare with much inward satisfaction; only to be reminded, presently, that our altruism may be counted on within limited boundaries only, while our personal ease and comfort and social privilege are everywhere sure of our most jealous and generous consideration.

If any one thinks that because the public opinion of today has become acutely sensitive to the wrongs of children in the mills, or

shop-girls underpaid, or unorganized labor selfishly exploited, it has at last awakened to a true sense of brotherhood with men, let him consider its attitude to unpopular races whose interests seem to clash with ours — Mexico, for example. With all our insistence upon the rights of American citizens in that country, and the need of protection for foreign interests, and of punishing flagrant outrages against life and property, how many of our papers have shown any intelligent sympathy for the tens of millions of ignorant, downtrodden men and women and children in our sister republic, whose sufferings cry to heaven for pity. She is the less fortunate neighbor lying in distress at our very door, and yet for the most part those who voice popular sentiment seem scarcely to have noticed the appeal of her sufferings, much less to have regarded it with thoughtful and brotherly solicitude. As a people, we would appear to view the problem from the angle of unmitigated pride and selfishness, from which angle it is intractable indeed. The undoubted peril of our national relations with the Chinese and Japanese rests almost exclusively upon this same racial selfishness and arrogance. If this is true of America, what shall we say of Europe with its intenser jealousies? It is not wholly strange that the famous Orientalist, Arminius

Vambery, as a despised Hungarian Jew, should say that in his long experience of the various religions of Europe and Asia he had found them all alike in their spirit of bigotry and all uncharitableness.

Joseph Cook is quoted as saying that the last century had made of the world a neighborhood, and that it was for the coming century to make of it a brotherhood. Yet, in spite of its twentieth century enlightenment, Christendom gives little more than a contemptuous toleration to the Christian doctrine of fraternity. It is a principle that can grow only in the soil of unselfish love, and such divinely watered soil is rare and precious. Nevertheless, if we believe in Jesus, our outlook upon the world of men must tend more and more to be like his, and his outlook, beyond all mistake, was that of the elder brother. To be sure, this is divine. But it is not therefore unhuman, and he asked no less of his disciples than that their outlook should be as his own. It will take more than threescore years and ten to bring it within the reach of most of us; but our faith at least is his faith, and the love will follow after. Already it has transformed many of his followers, and though they would be the first to lament the poverty of their likeness to him, yet we revere their deep devotion to the welfare of their fellows every-

where — a devotion not born of class-consciousness, but of the consciousness of their Father's love.

Many would-be leaders of thought in our day claim to have an exalted faith in men. But often, on examination, their faith is found to be shallow or sentimental or unsound, because it does not take into account all the factors that are involved. But Jesus' faith in men was rooted in the deepest realities of human existence, and could bear any strain put upon it, even that of outrage and death.

It rested broadly upon two great conceptions, that always kindled Jesus' imagination to noble visions of the Kingdom yet to be — a Kingdom of God, yet a Kingdom made up of men. These were, the reality of God's Fatherhood over all mankind, and the reality of the human brotherhood that follows of necessity from that filial relation.

Some of us may have had the feeling, still shared by the more conservative element in our churches, that the doctrine of the universal fatherhood of God is more the outgrowth of human pride than of New Testament teaching. There are many who regard it with suspicion, as one of those complacent assertions due rather to the exuberance of our modern spirit of self-glorification than to any humble acceptance of Biblical truth.

The teaching of the reformed churches for centuries has been that, outside of the circle of the elect, there is "no fatherhood, only sovereignty." How ruthlessly this has been asserted and how relentlessly its implications have been used to crush the bruised hearts that Jesus would have bound up, it is well that most of us have forgotten.

There is an obvious confusion in the use of the terms that describe the relation of men to God, which gives color to this time-honored abridgment of man's birthright. Manifestly, not all men are "the sons of God by faith in Jesus Christ"; neither are all his children in the sense that "every one that loveth is born of God." Not all are the brothers of Jesus as declared by his saying "whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother," nor have all "the right to become the children of God" that is given only to those who receive him. In all these cases, and in others that will occur to any careful reader of the New Testament, sonship and brotherhood are regarded as dependent upon a predominant moral kinship with the Father which multitudes do not possess. Manifestly, any actual and practical sonship is of this moral character, and cannot be shared by those who definitely refuse for themselves the filial relationship.

And yet while all this is true — constitut-

ing as it does the great tragedy of human existence — there is a majestic reality that underlies it, in which are the glory and the hope of all mankind. It is something far more intimate and significant than the fact that all men are the creatures of God, and that the divine immanence makes them, together with the birds and beasts and flowers, the manifestation of his life and power. All this is true. But any one who believes in Jesus must believe that something far greater than this is true. "Ideally and intentionally," all men are sons of God. Jesus never directly taught the universal sonship of humanity, but his whole mission assumes it as the basis of everything he said and did.

He constantly used the fact of God's Fatherhood to illuminate human duties — duties that took no account of saint or sinner, of elect or reprobate, but that rested on all alike who shared the common mercies of God. It would seem clear as the light that he made no distinction among men in the heavy demands he laid upon them — the demand, first of all, for love toward their Father in heaven. Only love can claim love. And every word that Jesus spoke assumed that the sinners with whom he consorted were loved of God, and that, in spite of their sin, they owed everything to God because they

were inalienably his sons and daughters still. They might be lost sheep, but they were the sheep of God, and not of the Wicked One; and it was God who was seeking them with great desire. The wastrel son might be blackening his father's name in Bohemian revelry in a far country, but his father still had him in his heart, and would watch for him patiently though days lengthened out to years. And so, although Simon's lip curled to see Jesus' courtesy to the vulgar abandoned woman who followed him in to the feast, Jesus spoke to her as to a sister in God's holy household. Manifestly, he saw in men those made in God's image, for his own possession, able to understand and answer to his love with undying affection, and so of absolute and eternal worth to him. It is of little use disputing about terms, where the facts infinitely transcend the words with which we seek to connote them; but an unprejudiced reading of the story of Jesus' life will leave one in little doubt that the common fatherhood of God underlay all his attitude to men and his outlook upon society.

This, then, is our faith, as we look out upon the world of men. It may sound commonplace enough, to us who have had Christian training; but how like dynamite such a faith would be, in our society or any other, if it

were honestly held and faithfully acted on by any considerable number.

The sacredness and absolute worth to the Almighty of every human life is a principle that our world has always regarded with disdain, when it has regarded it at all. The weak, the ignorant, the poor, have always been the spoil of the strong. It was not only the cultured Greek who was inhumanly cruel to those whom chance misfortune had reduced to slavery. The same inhuman contempt for human agony, and the same utter obliviousness to the rights of human personality, are to be found unchanged today in almost every land where the teaching of Jesus Christ has not come. And how many there are in England and America today, whom our Lord would first of all remind that it were better that a great millstone were hanged about their neck and they were cast into the depths of the sea, than that they should so amuse or profit themselves at the deadly cost of others' degradation. The exploiter of his fellows is not chiefly the capitalist, it is the selfish man, whether rich or poor, who allows his own passion or pleasure or profit to come before the welfare of his brother or sister.

Thirty years of mingling among men should have taught us this at least, that it is of no use guiding ourselves in these matters

by the conventions of society, or by what the public opinion of our day regards as allowable. Our only safety is in honestly seeking the point of view of Jesus, rather than that of the dramatic or literary or journalistic authorities of the cultured world. Thus he was, in very truth, what every man of honor should scrupulously seek to be, "a brother to all women." And his outlook upon the tangled web of social relations was that of the Elder Brother of the family. By what right, in the court of last inquiry, are we free from such a sternly uncompromising solicitude for the honor and virtue of others? Moral degradation, and cancerous, corrosive self-indulgence in immorality make good copy for the journalist, and are the chosen material for much of the drama and literature of our day. The contemplation of it furnishes agreeable diversion for much of the reading and theater-going public. No one supposes that this would yield an agreeable sensation if it were one of his own family whose shame and ruin he was regarding. But by what right are we freed from the moral brotherhood that Jesus felt, whose responsibility he never sought to evade or disown?

A man of middle age, with a daughter of his own whose purity and wholesome happiness are of immeasurable value in his eyes,

should at least be able by sympathy to understand how Jesus would feel were he looking at the pretty chorus girls of some popular ballet. Granting instantly that some of them may be of as high character as the daughter of the most favored home, he will also grant that they live in a maelstrom of temptation, in which many of them will presently be sucked down to a cruel and disastrous end. Not for all the world would he allow his own daughter to go that way. And yet society approves the getting of its amusement by the sensuous diversion that they offer. The man who looked out on the theatrical stage through the eyes of Jesus would be likely to see much of what it offered through a mist of tears. The boy who grew up with Mary his mother, in that family of girls as well as boys, was such a chivalrous and passionate defender of the home, and of its sanctities resting on mutual trust and honor, that we know all too surely how he would regard the infinite variations of the general theme of home degradation and defilement that appeal to popular taste today through mind and eye and ear. A believer in Jesus should not be too squeamish to demand of himself how his Master would enjoy the tales, e.g., of de Maupassant, nor should he be too modern to shape his taste on lines that the Master would approve.

It is a very ancient inquiry, how much is a man of more value than a sheep. But it is not out of date. There are wide areas of our modern world where a sheep is of more value still, because the market seems to be glutted with human lives, while of sheep we can never have too many. The absolute worth of each of these worthless human lives — because the sons and daughters of the Most High — is something that Jesus would see and feel and act upon as if by instinct. But there are not many of us with whom the belief has yet come to be much more vital than a theory to which we stand committed. If an unfortunately small and helpless people comes to stand in the way of Imperial Policy, then they have only themselves to thank for their practical extermination, as the most enlightened public sentiment of Germany decided in the case of the Herreros of Southwest Africa. The many thousands of women and children were swept away like insects by those who needed for themselves the lands these helpless ones infested, though the Herreros, like our own Indians, had been hereditary possessors of the soil for uncounted years.

Many of us are shocked by such ruthlessness as this, who yet bear with entire equanimity the fact that a million men and women in London today,

"In places infamous to tell,
Where God wipes not the tears from any eyes,"

live with less of physical content and well-being than the average African, — as may be proved with piteous amplitude to any one who is curious enough to examine into the heart-sickening reality. Half of the American people, only sixty years ago, accepted the Supreme Court ruling that their black neighbors had no rights that they were bound to respect; and until now there are multitudes of our fellow-citizens to whom it would never occur to respect the personality of colored man or woman. It is a pitiful thing, anywhere on the edges of Western civilization, to have to stand by and watch helplessly the insulting and contemptous treatment meted out to self-respecting girls and young women of Eurasian or half-breed blood, — treatment which reflects so relentlessly the valuation that we of the ruling race put upon those of lower race who have no helper.

No doubt we turn away indignantly from such blasphemy as this against God's thought of sacred dignity for all men. But as years pass, and we come to know a little of all sorts and conditions of men, we realize that we, too, in our complicated industrial civilization, are in danger of using men's lives cheaply and thoughtlessly for our personal

convenience. Polite and privileged society, in days not long gone by, has been content to have the structure of its comfort reared on the inexcusable sorrows and hard labor of the poor and helpless. It seemed to them that such frightful inequality in opportunity was an essential part of this sorry scheme of things, and they consented to see men used — and women and children, too — as we would never for an instant allow an animal to be used, under our authority. A hundred years ago, in England, when women and little children worked underground in the mines, under almost bestial conditions, there could always be found men of high position in State and Church, living in ease and refinement and luxury, who protested violently against any interference with the labors of these pitiful victims on whom their own prosperity appeared to rest.

To us of today it is all but unthinkable that presumably honest men should have looked out on the world with eyes so alien to the spirit of Jesus. And yet we, too, so long as our privileges are secure, are apt to listen only intermittently and with languid interest to the never ending story of the use of human lives as though they were only one of the raw materials of industry, to be conserved economically, like any other valuable commodity, but not to be regarded as mem-

bers of the family, meant to have a chance in God's own world at life's best things as much as we. We talk glibly of reform and social readjustments, but we do not easily or willingly come to see that any adequate readjustment is likely to abridge the rights and immunities and comforts that we complacently regard as ours of necessity and by every propriety under heaven. The " rights " of a human soul, on its Father's broad rich earth, are something on which we are very slow to reflect, lest our conclusions should be inconvenient or bewildering.

But the subject is one on which we must reflect, honestly and unafraid, if our outlook on life is to be that of disciples of Jesus. And we who have reached middle age are not ashamed to confess that we are still learning the first lessons as to that primary truth of the universal Fatherhood of God. We shall have gone but a little way in it before life's lessons are over, simply because love is the hardest of all the lessons that life has to learn.

We have reason to be deeply grateful that the world-wide labor of foreign missions is ever before our eyes, as a reminder of what the spirit of Jesus is, and as a gauge of the reality of our own professions of discipleship. The attitude of the average man toward such Christian knight-errantry re-

flects the deep-seated scepticism of our time as to the soundness of Jesus' position regarding our common heritage as God's children. On any steamer going to the Far East you may meet with so-called Christian men, staunch churchmen, who would be the strongest defenders of the value to their country of the established church and its teachings, who yet look with unconcealed disgust and contempt upon the men and women who are going out to China or India or Japan to carry those same teachings to the people of the East. "Jackass missionaries" Lafcadio Hearn called them. They still regard the whole enterprise, as did Sydney Smith, as the "most mad, useless, and dangerous project that could be devised." Claiming to regard the truths of Christianity as a very way of life for their own people, they naively assert that for the Oriental his own faith is good enough, — although for themselves they are quite convinced that Hinduism or Buddhism could lead nowhere but into the hopeless dark.

It amounts to a flat denial of the essential brotherhood that comes from membership in the same family of the Heavenly Father and that makes the glad tidings of God's love of equal value and importance to every soul of man. There is behind it a sort of cynical denial — as from a standing of

ineffable superiority in God's sight — of the right of any backward race to share the spiritual birthright of the white man. If "the heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone," that is entirely his own affair; it seems suited to his intellectual and moral capacities, and there is little use in thrusting on his attention even those infinite and eternal truths that are of proven power to inspire and redeem all human life.

The fact is that those who reason thus do not care to be troubled with the spiritual affairs of Hindus or Mongolians, any more than they care to be bothered with the domestic affairs of the Chinaman who does their washing. And certainly they do not esteem their own religion highly enough to make any sacrifice to share its benefits with other races. Sympathy and honest conviction seem about equally to be lacking. But for men who genuinely believe in Jesus Christ, a fair gauge of the reality of their faith in him is found in their sympathy with men and women on the far-flung battle-line of the church, where goes on silently and unapplauded the never ending struggle to bring the love of our Heavenly Father into the hearts and homes of men. And all honest men are indebted to this world-wide labor of unselfish love for an inestimable incitement and stimulus to more Christian thinking

as to the whole duty of man to men. There may have been for us a tinge of romance about missions when we were in our childhood; but now that we are far on the road of the prosaic practicalities of life, and are pretty well disillusioned of merely theoretical altruism, we give humble thanks to God for this thrilling evidence that Christ is still with his servants, leading them to the ends of the earth with the message of his heavenly grace.

It was a direct consequence also of Jesus' faith in the divine lineage of all men, that he treated them as capable of heroic things. He did not degrade them by asking only the minimum of courage and devotion on their part, as though they were unequal to a higher and sterner calling. He laid on them regal demands, because he knew that regally they could make answer — as they did. And if we believe in Jesus we, too, shall believe in men — in their freedom of will, and their power of noble choice, and their proud superiority to enfeebling environment.

Until the Great War came and set up a new standard of values in the appraisement of human capacity for sacrifice, it was a sign of our times that we were increasingly afraid to ask or expect hard things of men. Just in proportion as a generation grows soft in self-indulgence and luxury does it make sympathetic allowance for human weakness, until

it fears to suggest the heroic, and tries to smooth the path of duty at every point from childhood to old age, so that one may get on with fair credit even if he follows the path of least resistance — as we half assume that he must do. It does not like to hear about the "stern daughter of the voice of God," but prefers its own interpretation of the easy yoke and the light burden, adapting them to feeble wills and irresolute desires.

All of us tend inevitably to grant this kindly dispensation to ourselves, and still more, and by consequence, to make our benevolent apologies for others. We are so impressed with the frailty of human nature that we treat it with exaggerated allowance for its defective heredity and its fatal leaning to self-indulgence. Judging by some of the most popular literature of our time, man is wholly animal — in a refined and romantic and extremely alluring way, of course — and is swayed by nothing higher than what is of the earth, earthy. Others look upon him as one in whom the ape and tiger are still in the ascendant, although higher impulses stir him from time to time and give rise to fitful but for the most part ineffectual struggles toward spiritual ends.

But the bidding of Jesus, over against all this muddy obfuscation of man's true nature,

stands out clear as a shaft of lightning against the summer night, "Ye shall be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect." This was his divinely uncompromising challenge, based on what he saw to be the ultimate and eternal fitness of things. He asked unhesitatingly for what only a child of God could give. Indeed, he asked for the impossible, if we are to measure our possibilities by the brief uncertain career of the physical body. He was taking into consideration later stages of development than those with which we are most familiar, here under the sun. But even for these years of physical limitation, where one is beset on every hand by the earthly seductions to which our senses are so quiveringly responsive, where our ignorance and inexperience and imperious appetites plead for excuse and indulgence at every step of the way, Jesus asks for the heroic.

He was not afraid to put self-denial in the forefront of his requirements upon his followers. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me." He knew what stuff he had to deal with, and the proud principle of *noblesse oblige* lay behind all his invitations and injunctions. Those commonplace, illiterate peasant-women of the villages, whom he knew so well, shut up to their pitiful little

horizon of Oriental pettiness and prejudice, he addressed as the daughters of the Most High God. That Samaritan woman at the well may have been as vain and tawdry as her reputation proclaimed her, but Jesus saw in her something that no other eye discerned. He treated her with the considerate respect due to one born for high estate. She could rise up, even then, and return to her Father.

If we believe in Jesus we shall believe in ourselves as well as believe in men. Believe in ourselves enough to bow our head humbly to a high destiny, that is to be achieved only through ways that we have no courage to choose or tread unaided; and believe in men enough to lay upon them unhesitantly the old heroic calling to give themselves to God, not counting the cost. We come to learn that the cheap and easy terms of discipleship are too cheap to fit our needs — even our preferences.

Some churches in our day have been trying to see how broad and attractive they could make the way into the the Kingdom, so that none but the unpleasantly and aggressively reprobate could find excuse for staying without. They have appealed to the multitude by all the means that the multitude enjoys; by music, and sensational addresses, and dramatic readings, and moving pictures,

and an almost complete absence of annoying or unpopular doctrines, or antiquated appeals for " decisions " as though the church were vulgarly seeking converts. But few of us can reach middle age without recognizing how paltry and unworthy it all is, and how inefficacious.

O that the church everywhere dared emulate its Master's faith in men, and boldly ventured to confront them with those life-and-death realities to which the most idly pleasure-loving hearts still vibrate; bringing men the clear call to repentance and forgiveness, the promise of a cleansed heart and power for victorious living, and the summons to stand out openly shoulder to shoulder with the great army of those who would fain spend their life-capital, to its last red drop, for Christ and his Kingdom. Being made in the image of God, it is still the high calling of God to which men answer, and not the cheap and colorless Christianity of good form and respectable behavior.

Thank God, also, that of us Jesus demands higher things than we should ever demand of ourselves. We should count ourselves presumptuous fools to set the mark as high as he has placed it for us. But he knows us better than we know ourselves, and he sees how he is to bring us through. We cannot see how he is to succeed with such material

as we have to offer. But we know that God has made us for himself, our sufficiency is of him, and some day — some day — we shall see what transfigured end he has all along been striving to bring to pass. Wherefore, with humble hope and joy, we take Christ's faith in men to be our faith.

CHAPTER XI

The Good Fight

ANYONE who believes in Jesus comes to perceive, soon or late, that his life must be one of strenuous concentration on an all-absorbing aim. If he actually drinks in his Master's spirit he inevitably discovers how tremendous an issue life involves, and with what mortal earnestness this issue must be fought out. All else must be subordinated to it — every other interest of life must be viewed in relation to it. He must be a man of one idea, content to be called narrow and bigoted by men of a cultured catholicity of outlook not assertively Christian. He must be able to say with Paul, "One thing I do," and to do it, with a resolution that bends everything to the attainment of his purpose.

As life goes on, we come to be weary with a great weariness of the dilettante type of Christianity that prevails throughout Christendom, and that saps the life-blood of the church of God. The passionate enthusiasm of Jesus for a great spiritual end, it shuns with unmistakable genuineness of aversion, seeking for a polite and tolerant breadth of view as to all of life's problems, that shall be as unlike as possible to his unsparing inten-

sity of conviction. There is no sort of question that Jesus in the flesh would fit in extremely ill with our canons of a cultured tolerance, that can see all sides of a moral or religious question so sympathetically as not to be stubbornly insistent upon any one of them.

He had no fear of appearing fanatical or harsh in his opinions, simply because of the life-and-death seriousness of the conditions he was confronting. The modulated tones of voice that are suitable for the quiet of the classroom are quite forgotten when one is facing the elemental passions of the crowd on a sinking ship in mid-ocean. One learns then how stern and peremptory the tones of a human voice may be, and how reassuring for their very sternness. And Jesus was face to face with those elemental needs and perils of the soul. Our outlook on life must somehow be brought in harmony with him who said to his nearest friends, "If thine eye cause thee to stumble, pluck it out and cast it from thee," and, "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." We remember how many other utterances there were of like tenor.

Unless there is actually a sweet reasonableness behind this austere conception of the gravity of life's struggle, these utterances are

those of a fanatic — one little suited to be the Guide and Master of our refined society of today. Only the utter truth of his moral perspective and of his scale of values could justify such a view of life, or make it harmonious with his gentle and kindly spirit. But if life really is so intense a struggle, for an end of inestimable value, then must we cleave to our Leader still, satisfied that his uncompromising way is the way of life and truth and joy. We take for ourselves his unrelenting simplicity of aim.

There can be no doubt regarding life's supreme issue as Jesus saw it — it is the question whether a man will choose God's will or no. Its struggle is the struggle for character, in spite of the world, the flesh and the devil. A thousand forces pull us down — the voice of God calls us upward. It is a goodly fight — the fight to which all the sons and daughters of God are called. But in the very nature of the case it must have first place in all one's scheme of living. All our judgments of what is wise or expedient in conduct must be determined in the light of this supreme consideration. As Henry Drummond said, "Probably most of the difficulties of trying to live the Christian life arise from attempting to half live it." And at this point, the experience of years has much to teach us.

One does not need to live very long among men to realize that this gathering up of all one's energies upon a single over-mastering moral purpose — that of being in all things a hearty disciple of Jesus Christ — is exceedingly distasteful to the majority, even the majority of professing Christians. It lays life under too sharp a restraint. It is in bad form, it is narrow and puritanical, it is old-fashioned and out of touch with present-day breadth of view, it is pretentiously pious, and in any case it is impractical and impossible. No objection is made to one's joining the church and making a profession of religion if he wishes to do so; but to subordinate all one's opinions and practices to the test of their suitableness to a heavenly calling, and to set up such a standard as this for society, is nothing more nor less than fanatical. In any case, the ordinary man or woman cannot be supposed to accept and abide by any such conception of life's meaning.

Certainly it would be rash to expect it of them except as they believe in Jesus. But if one believes in Jesus, how in the sight of God is he to shape his life on any other plan? How can he escape the vivid intensity of moral earnestness that characterized his Master? If our Christian purpose is flabby and half-hearted and readily adjustable to all the

opinions and practices of polite society, it is manifest that we are but mechanical and unsympathetic followers of him who said: "My meat and drink is to do the will of Him that sent me." And that there is an enormous volume of such characterless Christianity, no one who has seen much of the Christian church in different lands can doubt. There is a fight for wealth, a fight for scholarship and reputation and power, that is recognized as suitable and proper for men in any walk of life. But the fight for an uncompromising loyalty to the spirit of Jesus Christ is distinctly not in good form for a scholar or a gentleman. The man who adopts it is certain to be in the way. He does not fit in. He is an awkward member of society. His enthusiasms and his conscientious objections are too pronounced. He might do for the times of Calvin or Cromwell, but he is an anachronism in ours.

Yet as life goes on we are compelled more and more to recognize that a worthy discipleship of Jesus means everything or nothing. If it is not thoroughgoing, it is in some respects a pitiful make-believe. And if it is thoroughgoing, it must needs challenge every seductive allurement and every gracious invitation of life by the test of their suitability to the great endeavor. We have set out to be Christ's faithful soldiers and servants to

life's end. It is a plain path of privilege and joy. But how one may achieve it without giving him first place and guiding every energy of life by the supreme consideration of his will, who can tell us? It would be like telling one how to achieve the rewards of victory by cowardly retreat. Jesus evidently saw no other way than that of unqualified fidelity to himself. "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me." And if we have really caught his spirit we shall bend everything to the great end of success in the good fight. We shall make our own the old Methodist prayer,

> "To serve the present age,
> My calling to fulfil,
> O may it all my powers engage
> To do my Master's will."

To listen to many exponents of art and literature in our day one would suppose that culture had quite superseded self-restraint, and that such a thing as rigorous self-denial for a high end was crude and Philistine. Denial of self in things that are vulgar, yes! But self-denial in things that society approves, or that a man of the world is supposed to be familiar with! Why should one set himself up to be so puritanically superior to his fellows? And yet if Christ the Lord is our Lord, and we have engaged to fight the good fight under his direction, can we fail

to deny ourselves the things whose influence rises like a fog between ourselves and him and shuts him from our gaze?

An English friend once found Jenny Lind sitting by the seashore with an open Bible on her knees, gazing at the sunset. "Madame Goldschmidt," said her friend, "how did you come to abandon the stage at the very height of your success?" "When every day," Jenny Lind replied, "made me think less of this" (laying a finger on the Bible) "and nothing at all of that" (pointing to the sunset), "what else could I do?"

Of course it is open to any one to say that she should have felt differently. But feeling as she did, could she on any other terms keep in the divine fellowship of Jesus Christ and his faithful soldiers and servants? It would be far otherwise could we regard Christianity as a pleasant garnishment of life, that enhances every pleasure and detracts from none. But Christianity is not a garnish of life's pleasures, but a very way of life itself; and it holds to its high purpose whether pleasures come or go, knowing that it is the only way at once of righteousness and joy. The fight for character is the good fight. And as there is no such leader in the fight as Jesus, so the fight for character under his leadership is the supreme task of every professing Christian.

We may as well grant at once that this is individual and personal in a high degree. It is personal and not social religion with which we are first of all concerned, and in the nature of the case it must needs be so. To do the will of God is our first concern. This will is largely concerned with our social duties, but it is only our own personal victory over sin and self that brings an adequate performance of these duties within our reach. Our own day is in acute need of plain speaking at this point. Our young people especially have been led to suppose that the first duty of man is to be beneficently busy about other people's business, almost irrespective of whether one's own life is cleansed and saved by God's love or not.

A noted sociologist has said that to endeavor to render social service without deep religious convictions of one's own, is like tying a bunch of living roses on a dead stalk. In the long years of a lifetime our strictly social activities are likely to occupy but a tithe of our energies. It is the sum total of our conscious life that matters. Now and again through life some of us will be privileged to have direct access to human need in such a way as will give a chance for a noble ministry of love, provided we have the grace of self-forgetfulness; and many of us may have opportunity from time to time to aid

the fight for social reform along many lines. But day by day and night by night, in sickness and in health, at home or abroad, alone or in the midst of the crowd, as children and in old age, we shall be summoned to the good fight for a transparent loyalty to Jesus Christ. At its heart the good fight is as intensely personal as the innermost depths of our own spirit, with which no man may intermeddle.

No prophet in our day has had deeper social sympathies than Count Tolstoi, and yet perhaps no one has stated so clearly as he the essential fallacy of supposing that one's primary concern is to help others, when the battle of his own life is far from being fought out. He speaks with sharpest irony of those who feel, since they are so intelligent and worthy, that "their vocation and sacred duty is to enlighten, organize and direct the lives of others." "Every day," he says, "I get letters from young high-school girls who ask me naïvely to whom they ought to do good by communicating their wisdom and their kindnesses. The only good work for a man is to live according to God. The man who lives thus, whose principal aim it is to increase in his own soul love for his neighbor and to free himself from his own vices and bad tendencies, will not be in such a hurry to enlighten others. Today the disease

seems to infect everybody. The remedy will come only when men are awakened from this hypnotic epidemic, and will at last understand that the amelioration of the state of society can be brought about only by the amelioration of the individuals in this society, and that man can act with success only on himself."

This is not wholly pleasant doctrine, even when we do not push it so far as Tolstoi was inclined to do. Any one who knows our colleges today knows that "personal religion" is a disagreeable and avoided subject; but nothing is more popular than the discussion of our neighbor's religion, or of the ways of improving it and of uplifting the depressed strata of society. It is easy to see the strenuous contest that is going on there, and it is easy and pleasant to engage in it at a distance in imagination. But to face the stern exigencies of one's own soul in utter faithfulness is something from which we shrink instinctively. After all, the gravest perils that beset society are apt to be the same ones in essence that threaten our own manhood, and the struggle to be fought must first be fought out in our own souls. The first contribution to society, that we are in honor bound to pay, is the contribution of our own selves, honorable and unstained and victorious over temptation.

Certainly one of the most insidious perils of our time is the hunger for relaxation and amusement. Our forefathers lived in what would seem to us a dull gray monotony of routine, without vacations, without sports, without any exciting or highly spiced amusements. As life during this last fifty years has steadily speeded up, until the pace is now hurried and the strain of it racking to the nerves, our present generation is ever more clamorous for amusement that really amuses, for excitement, for stimulation, and — almost equally — for relaxation and at least momentary relief from worry. Never was the temptation to the use of drugs, both stimulant and narcotic, so appealing as it is today. To be at ease for a little, to enjoy high spirits for an hour or two at night after a weary day, to drift through pleasant dreams instead of being harried by care — men thirst for relaxation such as this with a feverish thirst, and will pay a high price in physical or moral danger in order to obtain it. Not one of us is exempt from the need of a searching self-restraint at this point.

How many of us who are now middle-aged men have fought through every stage of the argument for and against the use of alcohol as polite society uses it. We could not join in any public movement to rid society of the

curse of drink until we had first fought out for ourselves the question of the pleasant indulgence in a little stimulant when it seemed agreeable and beneficial. We had to impose an unyielding restraint upon ourselves before we could honestly seek to lay hated restrictions upon the pleasures of others. And yet how clearly we now see that the stern restriction is necessary for society's greater good.

The need of rigorous principle that shall be honestly loyal to the will of Jesus Christ is yet more apparent in the struggle for a clean life for ourselves and others. There can be little doubt that the coming generation is threatened with a wave of perilous and hitherto unequalled laxity at this point. The demand for stimulation of the senses is making itself felt here as nowhere else. The peril to our young people from alcohol is as a bagatelle in comparison. To keep a pure heart and an unstained imagination is likely to grow increasingly difficult from year to year. The pressure for more license is seen in our magazine literature, in our current works of fiction, in our popular art, in the very rapid increase in the suggestive and objectionable element in the "movies," in the type of dancing most in vogue, in dress and manners, and in the increasing impatience of any criticism or restriction upon im-

modesty or refined indecency. It requires courage even to speak out honestly for the rights of the soul against the seductions of the flesh.

No one likes to be accused of priggishness or hypocrisy, or to be called Pharisee or Philistine; and yet no one may give faithful heed to the high call of the good fight and hope to escape condemnation for his squeamish narrowness. To put God first, even at the cost of a stern denial of sensual gratifications that blind the eye of the soul, demands of any college man today a heroic struggle. And yet how can one pretend to be honest as a follower of Jesus, and yet deliberately expose himself to temptations of eye and ear that sting and burn, and cling to memory and imagination like the poisoned shirt of Nessus. Such minor temptations fairly tread on each other's heels in these days, when all bars are down and one's choice of recreations may lead him where he will.

Perhaps in nothing else does mature life lead one to clearer principles of self-limitation than in this respect. We have learned something of God and more of men. We understand something of our Father's yearning for sons and daughters of pure heart and unstained honor, as members of his household; and we have learned even more of the relentless and almost savage sternness with

which nature scourges all self-indulgence and degeneracy in its later stages.

The mere fact of parenthood has perhaps taught us more than all else, bringing a welcome even if tardy wisdom as to the exacting terms of the good fight for noble manhood. There is hardly a passage in modern literature more pathetically full of interest and instruction than the unconscious self-revelation in the later letters of Lafcadio Hearn, touching the effect of fatherhood on his Bohemian spirit. Partly of Greek blood himself, Hearn was like a reincarnation of the pagan spirit, in his love of beauty for its own sake, untrammeled by any scruples of religion or morality. He rebelled fiercely against the restraints on freedom of life in a so-called Christian civilization. He went to Japan in middle life partly to escape this puritanical interference with natural living and to steep his soul at once in pagan freedom and in art. He became a Buddhist and married a Japanese wife. But after his little son was born, whom he devotedly loved, the whole world began insensibly to change its aspect. Love began to rearrange his perspective of life's values and to make him afraid, for his child's sake, of the license which he had so strenuously demanded for himself.

"Don't have children," he wrote to a

friend, "unless you wish to discover new Americas." "I am now beginning to think that really much of ecclesiastical education (bad and cruel as I used to imagine it) is founded upon the best experience of man under civilization. Many things I used to think superstitious bosh, and now think solid wisdom." He speaks of his resentment against certain diversions in which he used to find pleasure. "I can't look at a number of (a salacious French journal) without vexation, almost anger. I can't find pleasure in a French novel written for the obvious purpose of appealing to instincts that interfere with perception of higher things than instincts. You see how absurd I have become, — and this without any idea of principle about the matter, except the knowledge that I ought to avoid everything which does not help the best of myself — small as it may be. . . . The best part of my life has been wasted in wrong directions, and I shall have to work like thunder till I die to make up for it."

It was not religion but the heart principle of religion — unselfish love — that made him accept for himself and his family the necessity of a rigorous restraint in the effort for character. It sadly interfered with the poetry and romance of a life dedicated primarily to the beautiful, but he saw no way

of escape from the relentless law enunciated by Jesus Christ, "He that loveth his life loseth it." His earlier scheme of life, based upon self-pleasing and self-expression without reference to higher ends, led only to moral poverty and barrenness; and because he coveted a worthier life for those he loved, he would lay on them the restrictions that he had repudiated for himself with scorn.

The love of one's own flesh and blood is a marvellous corrective for feeble or self-indulgent principles. But the honest love of God simply makes havoc of a pseudo-tolerance that is really rooted in a careless indifference to our neighbor's good. If our loyalty to Jesus Christ is sincere, if his love genuinely constrains us, we shall be heartily afraid of those thoughts and sights and sounds that poison his life in men, and degrade or defeat the highest aspirations of the spirit.

The supremacy of a fighting purpose asserts itself not only negatively, against the things that it refuses, but positively, in its eager use of every aid that builds up life. A man who believes in Jesus will show the measure of his earnestness by the use he makes of the helps to spiritual conquest, that the long experience of struggling men and women has found to be actually life-

saving in their efficiency. It is a mere pretense to claim a genuine discipleship of Jesus and yet disregard or neglect those means of clearer vision and closer fellowship that lie just at one's hand. The innumerable Christians who habitually dull the eye of the soul with self-indulgence, and at the same time refuse to allow their moral sight to be revived by adequate worship or reflection, proclaim to all the world that they do not take seriously their profession of discipleship of Jesus Christ. The struggle for self-preservation in the natural world is instinctively supreme; in the spiritual world there is also a struggle for self-preservation equally instinctive and peremptory in its demands, if only the voice of the soul be not stifled by material things.

What shall a modern man do with Sunday? Shall he pretend to "keep" it, as though it still held its former place of importance? If he is not making a sorry jest of the spiritual life, he will not only pretend to keep it, but he will keep it in fact, with the same unmeasured determination with which he keeps life itself. The instinct of self-preservation, if he is in earnest, will save him from all foolish obfuscation of the real issue, and will compel him to recognize in that day of rest and worship a day of deliverance for the soul.

It is worth while to pause a moment upon this matter, because it is illustrative of many other questions of practical Christian living. The ordinary lad, just emerged from dependence upon others' guidance, is likely to ask himself in this life of the good fight, What must I do? and, What must I not do? as though some external dictation of authority were to be looked for in all matters of large importance. Alas! we have no tables engraved on stone, which we may consult to see what is or is not allowable. But we have a law of life, written in our very being, which impels us — above every other earthly concern — to press on, if so be we may lay hold on that for which we were laid hold on by Jesus Christ. If we are pressing on to that majestic consummation we shall find guidance, clear as a bugle note in a charge, to let us know what we may and what we may not do with safety.

And the demand for a day of rest and refreshment for the soul, hard pressed by the accumulated cares and pleasures of the week, is written broadly across the face of human experience. No man will allow himself to be slowly asphyxiated with poisonous gas if he is in his right senses. But men will suffer their spiritual life to be fairly suffocated with the deadly pressure of worldly interests, by refusing that breathing spell for

the soul which a well-spent Sunday surely means.

They say, "The Jewish Sabbath is dead." It is dead! It died with the early church, and was only resurrected for a time — in an incongruous and alien form — by the Reformed Churches. There is no danger that it will ever be revived, save for those who insist on keeping the Seventh Day for the reason given in the fifth commandment. But the early church adopted a new day, the first day of the week, as a day of joy and gladness for the soul, sacred to the highest interests of the spirit. It was to be a day of rest, as the Sabbath had been, — a divine benediction upon a wearied race of workers. It has passed through innumerable vicissitudes, but never has the need for it been so great as at this day, and never has the recognition of society's need of its weekly uplift been so world-wide as now. Continental legislation in the last twenty years bears witness to this fact.

But we shall look in vain for direction as to how we are to observe it. The Bible does not tell us. The church will not command us. We are quite at liberty, if we choose, to make selfish use of its opportunities or to refuse them altogether — as a drowning man may push away the white circle of the life-belt that has been thrown him from a

steamer. But the very instinct of self-preservation will lead one to seize upon it if he is in earnest about living.

The pressure of business and pleasure is now unprecedently keen. It largely swallows up the quiet home hours that used to give a little breathing space for thoughtfulness and spiritual renewal. Always the demand is for more time for work, and more chance for pleasure. Unless one resolutely resists the pressure, he finds his Sundays swallowed up by the same insatiable interests that demand the other six days of the week. And he will pay the price in the gradual atrophy of the noblest faculties of his soul. "There is a little plant in my soul called reverence," said Oliver Wendell Holmes, "which I like to have watered about once a week." But if one does not water it, presently it wilts and withers away. The very faculty by which we lay hold on God grows numb and unresponsive.

This is not a matter of theory or of pious affirmation. It is a matter of experience, as undeniable as the decay of physical powers under long disuse. All men are more or less conscious of the fact. They may deny it stubbornly in times of moral sluggishness or self-complacency, but any quickening of spiritual sensitiveness or concern reveals it to them beyond chance of controversy. To

be careless of Sunday, trifling as the test may seem, is to be dishonest with God. It is to push from us a minister to life, when we are professing to fight the good fight for life eternal. A supreme purpose to know and do God's pleasure will make a man fight for the means of grace to his own soul and the souls of his fellows, as an army fights to protect the lines of communication for itself and its allies.

The same holds true of Bible-reading, or of prayer, or of some line of definite altruistic service, or any other way of moral renewal and invigoration that cannot be neglected without loss. To be a believer in Jesus is to be a man of intense convictions and resolute practice along all these lines, because one simply cannot be honest with his Master and yet neglect these primary obligations of the soul.

"One thing I do, I press on." When such a purpose has behind it the momentum of thirty or forty years of conscious determination, persevered in through weakness and temptation and rebuffs of bewildering variety, it should certainly make one sensitively alert to the fundamental strategy of the long campaign. And there is one strategic principle concerning this fight for spiritual self-possession which grows ever clearer through the years, as one of inexpressible importance.

It was nobly put by the Italian patriot Mazzini: "If ever you have a strange moment of religious feeling, of supreme resignation, of quiet love of humanity, of a calm insight of duty, kneel down thankful, and treasure within yourself the feeling suddenly arisen. It is the feeling of life."

The moments of spiritual illumination are the strategic opportunities of the soul to press forward and take possession of new ground. There are moments, we well know, when under provocation the lower passions surge up into consciousness and for the time being almost hold us at their mercy. We could commit our wills at those instants to actions or choices that would intimidate and weaken our better selves for long afterwards. They are crises of danger, menacing the life of God in our hearts. Even a lad has learned this much from experience. But we are slower far to recognize that there are also moments of moral ascendency, when we are lifted up as by a higher tide than common of spiritual life and purpose. Our insight is more clear; mind and heart concur in apprehending the will of God, and in responding to the graciousness of his love.

These are the strategic moments for advance — for consolidating the tentative gains of the past and for crystallizing into inflexible determination resolves that have never yet

gone further than wistful aspiration. There is no ecstatic vision or tumultuous emotion. Never were we more perfectly possessors of ourselves in quiet reasonableness of spirit. It is simply that we are at our best, as we well know that in other moments we were at our worst. The veil between us and our Father hangs lighter than on common days. We can discern His will.

In earlier days we may have been distrustful of these moments, as though there was about them something suspicious or unreal; as though, forsooth, our real selves appeared in the times of passion or temptation, while these rare occasions of sensitiveness to a divine impulse were somehow mere surface ebullitions of emotion. Only as the years pass and we begin to grow old do some of us learn at last that the divine in us is as truly of our inmost selves as the inheritance of the ape and tiger, and that our hearts inevitably cry out for God at times so that we cannot choose but listen. It is when we are most sensitive to God's voice that we are most ourselves, and those are the golden moments of opportunity that we must seize upon and utilize for decision or for action before the preoccupation with lesser things surges in again upon our spirits. "It seems to me," says Phillips Brooks, "there is no maxim for a noble life like this: Count always

your highest moments your truest moments. Believe that in the time when you were the greatest and most spiritual man, then you were your truest self."

To believe in Jesus is to believe wholeheartedly in the good fight — not only in the fighting but in the winning. That there is a contest is obvious enough; that success is to be its issue is not so evident. Yet for faithful disciples of Jesus Christ there can be no hesitancy as to the outcome. Repulses and failures by the way there may well be; but the final issue is assured. And he who has in his heart this divine invitation and assurance will be under a powerful constraint to go determinedly forward. He cannot rest content with spiritual mediocrity — the mediocrity that tarnishes the true glory of the Church of Christ. He cannot be one of those lukewarm followers who break down the high spirit of their comrades by their indifference. As Owen Wister has said, through the mouth of the "Virginian," "A middlin' doctor is a pore thing, and a middlin' lawyer is a pore thing; but keep me from a middlin' man of God."

It is a shame that some of us should reach middle age as "middling" Christians. The need of our generation, as of all generations, is for men who have a passion for Jesus Christ and for his Kingdom — not a cool academic

approval of his ethics, but a personal loyalty to him, fused with a gratitude and love refreshed each day. They will be marked men. But it is marked men we need beyond all power of expression. Not only men of principle, but men of spiritual enthusiasm, who see by faith so vividly the victory Christ brings that they cannot be otherwise than devoted to him and to his gospel. If a man has it in him to be a burning and a shining light, it is a tragedy if his light burns so dim as barely to illuminate his own soul. It is piteously easy to disparage Billy Sunday; but if some of his flaming intensity of earnestness were diffused through the rank and file of our churches, what wonders of transformation we should see. Too many Christian lives are like an unfeathered arrow, wavering, ineffective, uncertain of their mark. But to believe in Jesus is to have one's life feathered by a God-given ambition, that carries it swift and straight to his goal, whatever that may be.

Anywhere along the edge of the Sierras in Southern California you may come upon the power-houses for developing electric energy. A slender stream of water is conducted for miles along the mountain side. A mere brook it is at best, that would quickly lose itself in the sandy plain; you could step across it at any point, as it flows swiftly and

silently in its open flume. But in its quiet course it comes presently to the yawning steel pipes that conduct it headlong down, hundreds of feet, to the giant turbines below; and there it leaps irresistible upon those whirling blades, with a roar of energy appalling in its intensity — and straightway in distant cities a thousand lights shine out and a thousand wheels revolve by power of that modest stream.

A life gathered up in one splendid aim bears the same relation to the common lives of diffuse or intermittent purpose that that concentrated column of water bears to other mountain streams rippling unharnessed down the valley. And it is to such a life of concentrated purpose, gathered together and directed to the one point of God's uses, that faith in Jesus calls the men and women of today.

CHAPTER XII

The Discipline of Pain

"THE weary weight of all this unintelligible world" bore very heavily upon our Lord. We may say in a sense that it broke his heart. And in a world where the Master became the Man of Sorrows because of the intractable miseries of his brethren, it is not possible for the servant to come off scot free. In proportion as our eyes are open and our sympathies awake, we, too, are compelled to recognize that this cannot be a holiday world for any one of us.

Our youthful feeling that the world owes us a good time wears off quickly, if we are at all thrown into the thoughtful companionship of Jesus Christ. We may have been with rather a merry crowd in our college days, but if by the goodness of God we have been so thrust out into the tides of common life as to see perforce how the other half lives, and how sullen and cheerless, nay, how bitter and cruel, is the well-nigh hopeless lot of innumerable men and women, we have been early sobered into thoughtfulness. And if we have further realized how our privilege and good fortune is a trust on their behalf, for which we must give account, life becomes

a serious and earnest matter — as it was with Jesus. It will be cheered by his courage and hopefulness and joy, but it will never escape the conviction that ease and comfort are not life's chief concern; and that even if we are drawn into some fellowship of suffering with our Lord and his brethren, no strange thing has befallen us.

All this would be true even if we stood in no peril of misfortune on our own account. Just because we are part of a race in trouble we cannot be surprised if we are involved in the sorrow of others in the family. "Bear ye one another's burdens" is a law of the Christian life. But alas! we have troubles of our very own. Indeed, it will be strange if our burdens do not involve others and at some time bear heavily on those who love us, who share their weight by sympathy.

We are fixed, here in this world, whether we will or no, in a framework of law that we cannot in the smallest degree evade, and that involves physical decay and death for us and for every one we love. These laws go on impartially, registering every error and folly on our part, and involving these delicate and quiveringly sensitive machines, our bodies, in a network of perilous consequence. It is no part of God's plan to shield us from the working of these laws of life, or to make

for his servants a privileged path of immunity from the common lot. The nerves he made to register sensation will thrill to pain as quickly in the saint as in the sinner. How can men suppose — as many do suppose — that they are somehow to win through this world unscathed, and that any distress befalling them implies the failure of God's love? Or that if he has left them bereaved, with aching hearts, he has done them wrong? It is all too obvious that God has placed us here, not to win a coward's victory by evading life's hardness and dodging the stern ways of Nature, but to come triumphantly through them all, with courage and patience and ever growing strength, until the last enemy is overcome.

After we have faced these thoughts for many years, and had them forced upon our attention from many angles, we are surely able by middle age to see more light than once we did upon the mystery of pain. A mystery it still is, and will be until we see all that God sees. But it is not so insoluble as once it was, and here and there are unmistakable gleams of heavenly light upon it. Our outlook upon life, in spite of all that we have seen of sadness, becomes one of settled optimism, because we believe in Jesus. Here again, all our hopefulness centers about him. Our sufficiency is of God.

The problem of pain is, of course, far too wide to be treated here in its entirety. It is bound up with all the tragedy of our race — the tragedy of sin and death. The never-ending wrongs and sorrows of society are but a part of it. We cannot try here to construct a theodicy or to justify the ways of God to man. We walk by faith, not by sight. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Yet the heart of the mystery is in the fact that much of earth's sorrow is merely brutalizing; it embitters and makes defiant. If one is at odds with his Maker it is a piteous thing to be desolate and afflicted. This is the very center of sin's tragedy. If one will have nought to do with him who bindeth up the broken-hearted, then this world may become a terrifying place. With what poignant sorrow our Lord faced this fact! We should be recreant to his compassion were we ever to forget it. But it is not the problem we have to consider now. Faith brings us out into another and a happier region — a region where love and purpose are evidently in the background.

How are we who believe in Jesus to look out upon life's disappointments? What is our outlook on life's various discipline, after so many years of difficult wayfaring? Is it any wiser, any calmer, any more triumphant than it used to be, for ourselves and

those we love? Or is it possible that even we who have long counted ourselves his disciples are bewildered and faltering because at last trouble has fallen upon us? Our faith had long since accepted the stern facts of life for others, but ourselves we regarded, all unconsciously, as sacrosanct; and now that pain and loneliness have overtaken us, is it possible that the light of our trust in God is all but blown out? What have we learned through all these years, out of the Bible and the open book of life about us? "Life and death are the great preachers." What have they taught us, as we have watched so many men and women live and die?

"To spell 'disappointment' with an h, — 'his appointment,'" is, after all, the summing up of all that we have learned. It is taught us by the word and example of Jesus, and is reinforced by the experience of a great company of his disciples. We can make no headway against adverse circumstances save as this is rooted in our conviction. The good will and the loving purpose of God are behind our sorrows, however these may have come. We do not need to reason it out in its detail, even so far as to seek to answer categorically the question, "Does God send sorrow?" It is very doubtful whether we can reason it out to

our satisfaction, with the aid only of the few factors of the problem that we have in hand. Our case would be very simple, of course, if we could see that our Father had directly laid on us the crippling accident under which our lives for a time lie prostrate. But the chances are that we cannot see.

It may have come as the direct result of our own folly. We may, e.g., have overworked and over-strained our powers, in spite of the remonstrances of our friends, until our nervous system gives out and plunges us into that strange twilight of mental and physical distress, where we grope blindly for the old world of light and cheer that we had supposed to be inalienably our own. In a dozen different ways we may have involved ourselves in troubles that, with more or less of justice, may be regarded as our punishment. Or, almost worse, a seemingly irretrievable misfortune may have come upon us through sheer carelessness — our own or others. Or the disaster may be due to the fault or even the wilful wickedness of evil men. The direct causes that have brought upon us an aching heart may be infinitely various and yet in no single instance clearly reveal any other agency than the blundering, foolish, or cruel act of ourselves or others. In such a case are we to say that the disappointment is his ap-

pointment? Are we to claim and find the comfort of believing that our Father's love is behind all that has overtaken us?

He who believes in Jesus will have no doubt as to the answer. The tiny sparrows are beaten down by sleet and storm, are chased by hawks and stoned by cruel boys, yet not one of them is forgotten before God, or falls gasping to the ground without him. And we are of more value than many sparrows. Jesus himself had first to learn this lesson before he could teach it to his disciples. He drank deep of the cup of disappointment. It was at his lips almost to the moment of his death. But his confidence that his whole life was guided by God's wisdom never failed him. It might be Judas or it might be a ruffian soldier who dealt the blow, but his Father's love was using it for a consistent and loving purpose.

His friends had early to learn the same lesson. It was hard for John the Baptist to realize that the one who had sent him on a royal errand might leave him in a dungeon, to be the sport of a wicked king and his helpless prey at last. And it would have been all but impossible for those two impetuous brothers, whom Jesus called from their fishing boats to be his friends and companions, to understand how one of them would be beheaded in five years and the other

live out the century, yet both equally bear witness to the love and guiding hand of God.

As for bearing stoically our own punishment, as though that at least were of an unrelieved bitterness that we had brought upon ourselves, in which God had no share, the world would be indeed a sad place were that the truth. If God were such a Father he would be far other than Jesus thought him, and far less good than the fathers whom we know. If it were only our perfect deeds that gave God a chance to react in love upon our lives, we should be in an evil case; for most of our living is marred with ignorance or weakness or self-will, and if his redeeming fellowship were to work with us only in our sinless moments, we would have little enough chance of growing into the divine stature. How pitifully and tenderly the fathers and mothers of our homes bear with the pathetically blundering efforts of their children, day after day working with them both in discipline and reward, but always in love, trying to build them up into true manhood and womanhood through all their ignorances and follies.

And so, unless we part company with Jesus, we must think of God. Does he send sorrow? Not one of us but has sent sorrow into our children's hearts a hundred

times, carrying disappointments heavy for childish hearts to bear. But we should have been selfish and unworthy parents had we spared ourselves the pain of their brief trouble. In our maturer lives we do wrong if we single out the griefs that have come to us partly through our own fault, and say, "This is my doing. God has no share in it, and I must bear it alone with what grace I may." God's law has brought it, and God's love is all about it day by day, working with it and through it, seeking to make us worthier children by its agency. It might be grim to bear alone, but we have no right to bear it alone if we have put our trust in him. Even though sin should have brought it on us, the very essence of forgiveness of sin is that son and Father should go on thereafter both together, his grace and strength and love lightening every consequence of pain his child may have to carry. The sorrow is his love at work. It may make the days hard to bear, but they will be days when he is at work with us for an end all glorious with joy.

It is an almost fruitless labor to try and search out the genesis of the troubles that befall us. How many people a minister is called to meet, especially in times of bereavement, who are torturing themselves with vain regrets and questionings as to

whether, if they had only acted more wisely at this juncture or at that, the outcome might not have been different; or whether any element of their fault had entered into the case, to involve God's displeasure and bring down this sorrow. There is nothing more inexcusably wasteful of life's joy than this useless probing into an irrevocable past, to see whether any elements of personal responsibility were there to rob us of trust and comfort in God's love in the present distress. The past is gone. Let it go! Only God knows its bearing on our present. But the present is ours. And its clarion call of duty is to rise up and play the man; not in obtuse forgetfulness of the past or of our weakness, but in humble yet joyous confidence in the unfailing love and guidance of our Father, who is using this, and every other one of life's joys and sorrows, to draw us to himself.

When we were in the full flush of youth and high spirits, all heavy sickness and sorrow probably seemed to us both repellent and mysterious. But we have lived to little purpose if we have not discovered before now that it is full of beneficent purpose and result, and that light plays all about it. As John Bunyan quaintly puts it, "The Valley of Humiliation is of itself as fruitful a place as any the crow flies over, and I have known many laboring men that have

got good estates there." God works out his fatherly purposes for us as readily through disappointment as through joy.

Nor can we imagine how poor and ineffective life's discipline would be, were all the elements of hardness to be withdrawn. Well do we know the type of life that we should choose for ourselves were the choosing in our hands. A life with health and good cheer unbroken, a busy, unthwarted career of activity and usefulness, a life cheered with love and saved from loneliness, — how kind we should be to ourselves and how disastrously thoughtful for our happiness! How ever should we be brave enough to choose the things that would build us up in courage and patience and trust and tender sympathy for others? For not one of these high qualities of a great soul is to be won, save out of mingled struggle and defeat and doubt and pain.

Certainly there is neither distinction nor virtue in being called to suffer. There is not much danger of spiritual pride in the fact that we have to fight for a foothold every day. On the other hand, can any one suggest how God is to perfect servants for his highest uses, servants proved steadfast and faithful under strain, without experiences that strain the spirit under trial? As F. B. Meyer said, "God wants iron saints;

and since there is no way of imparting iron to the moral nature other than by letting his people suffer, he lets them suffer." "Present tests are for future trusts." They may be unwelcome to bear, but if they are his appointment, we can gird ourselves afresh each day with confidence, to take up his way.

How well we know what it is to long for mere ease and bodily contentment! to be free of the strain of care, the weariness of physical disability! to be like the cattle, knee-deep in the meadow, browsing all day, sleepy-eyed with content, among the grasses by the running water, without care and without fear! Yet none of us but knows this is a dream, and not a worthy dream. No bovine contentment with good things can ever lead us anywhere we want to go. We have neither courage nor wisdom to choose the lot we need. But thank God that he makes his heroes out of those who but for him would be with Mr. Faintheart and Mr. Fearing to the end. It is only God who is wise and strong enough so to choose for us.

Even had we in us the stuff of heroes, our vision reaches such a little way, we have so tiny a conception of what life means, or of what use God would make of us, that we should be hopelessly at a loss to shape our own way with assurance. We can only trust ourselves implicitly to the road that

opens, and fear lest we grudge the effort to go forward. As Maltbie Babcock said, "If God permits anything hard in our lives, be sure that the real peril, the real trouble, is what we shall lose if we flinch or rebel." "The present circumstance which presses so hard against you," says some unknown writer, "is the best-shaped tool in the Father's hand to chisel you for eternity. Trust him, then. Do not push away the instrument lest you lose its work."

Does it seem to any as though we were drifting into the region of pious sentiment? It might perhaps seem so to one who has not often traversed this ground in thought or experience. But we remember that this is a common thoroughfare, trodden by unnumbered feet. Every inch of the way has been explored and tested by multitudes of plain-thinking men and women, seeking in stress of soul for some sure footing in the dark. And no doubt it is there. Any one who believes in Jesus must needs be sure that these are not mere devout imaginings, but primary facts of the spiritual life.

It is true that Jesus had amazingly little to say about life's pain or trial. Much he must have said, in quiet talks with men and women bearing heavy burdens, in the home and in their private life; but almost nothing of these intimate words has been preserved

to us. Yet the very foundation of his teaching about our trust in God is that God knows and cares and leads. We are not derelicts, driven on the great sea by every chance wind and wave and current. A firm hand is at the helm if only we will trust ourselves obediently to the Father's guidance.

Our Lord's own life was the chief witness to this truth. It was full of elements of hardness and humiliation, from his prentice days in the village shop to the last months when it was not safe for him to show his face among his own people. But our minds simply refuse to believe that he was the sport of unkind circumstance, or that he found reason for doubt or dismay in any of these things. As his friend said, a few years later when in a sea of troubles, "I suffer these things; yet I am not ashamed; for I know him whom I have believed."

And so we strengthen ourselves and take courage as we find the contrary winds of disappointment setting in to thwart our dearest purposes. It may be a strange dismaying way that is opening before us; but if he is leading us, would we dare to take our chance with any way of our own choosing? Nay! we would not dare! He knoweth the way that he takes. But we do not know; we can hazard no faintest guess as to where we should come out were we to

follow the joyous, untroubled course of our own preference.

We must grant that it is all a hopeless enigma if this life is all. Here among the deserts and mountains of the Southwest, the tragedy of broken hopes is always before one's eyes in its most pathetic form. Year by year there comes the unending procession of young people in the first flush of youth, out of the university often, or just at the threshold of business or the newly founded home, called to leave all, and after waiting a year or two in loneliness and mingled hope and fear, to say good-by to everything life holds dear and to dear life itself. God knows, it is a sight exceeding pitiful. But he does know! And these lost lives, so fragrant many of them with patience and trust, tempered some of them like fine steel for choice uses, are no more lost or wasted than the life of the Master was lost, broken off at thirty-three.

And how many millions, in these days of the Great War, are having to face this problem in anguish of spirit, as they see those they love going out suddenly from fullest strength and ardor of high hope into the unknown future. The glory of a noble and willing sacrifice is about the soldier, as it is not about these poor lads in the desert, but the hopeless mystery is the same, if God's

household has no more place for them at all.

Glory and honor and immortality are great ends, carrying one far out beyond the horizon of our world. Yet these are the ends God sets before his children. And he who believes in Jesus will not be daunted because the turn of the road, taking it out of sight, comes earlier with him than with most. To live softly many years, feeding our appetites undisturbed, is not what we want — we who are sons and daughters of God. As Captain Scott said, in those last words in his diary, written when freezing, starving, alone on the edge of death in that Antarctic night, "After all, how much better it has been than lounging in too great comfort at home." That was heroic! Yes! but it was most human! And the feeblest of us, in more humble exigencies, may rise to heights like that if our eyes are ever toward the Lord. For he will pluck our feet out of the net.

But we are not concerned chiefly with the distant end. It is almost easier for us to believe in a triumph then, when the light at last shines clear, than it is to believe in victory along the way, in days of dull heartache, unrelieved by any glory or illumination. It is so easy to talk confidently about high themes when in a semi-ecstatic mood.

But ecstatic moods are few and far between, and brave words have little power in those sleepless hours before dawn when troubles weigh like lead. The very essence of real trouble is that it often benumbs our sense of spiritual comfort. The sheer weariness of nervous fatigue clouds over our wonted clearness of vision.

That is where the triumph of faith comes in, that it holds firm when what we long to see and feel is beyond our seeing. If we could only see it, we should have no need of faith. Perhaps this is our only chance to keep faith for a little in the dark. If some of us could really see what will be true for us ten years from now, or twenty, we could go singing on our way with little need for trust or patience. But because we cannot see or imagine, we must even go on doggedly, day after day, holding our own by faith. And unless Jesus was all deluded, and the Christian life is a sham, there must be the possibility of a victory all along the way, even in dark and cloudy days. Unless we can say by faith with the light of each new morning, "Thanks be unto God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," we are receiving something less than what God would give his children when they are cast down.

CHAPTER XIII

Overcoming Under Difficulties

IT was all very well for John Bunyan to say that very tolerable living was to be had in the Valley of Humiliation — as perhaps he found it in those long years in Bedford jail. But the practical question is, How is it to be found for ordinary people? How can it be made tolerable? How can dreary days be made other than unprofitable and deadening to the spirit? If the burdens are too heavy, or the anxiety too great, or the pain too insistent, how can trust in Jesus Christ lighten the miserable oppression, or wring victory out of conditions that seem to imply defeat?

Assuredly there is an answer to these questions, for we have seen it worked out in human lives many times before our eyes. We can hardly fail to have known those who have walked steadily through months and years of crushing disappointment, not only in quiet self-possession, but in peaceful triumph of spirit, because God taught them how to live. How fervently and continuously they pled in secret for help to this end, we may not know. We did not see much of the struggle, only of its results. And yet,

if we have been sympathetic observers, we have learned a good deal of the practical ways and means of overcoming under stress of difficulty. We can speak of them with fair confidence, even though we may not have been called to put them into practice, or may have essayed them for ourselves with imperfect success, being new to suffering and little skilled in habits of courage. In any case, we have never reached middle age without some efforts to walk manfully when we were in danger of cowardice, and some desire to learn for ourselves how others won through their time of testing.

We have learned in general that men and women win these sometimes heroic victories of faith in ways that are almost commonplace in their simplicity, — by paying attention to every detail of mental and spiritual habit that may enable them to overcome. It is no large and spectacular experience of grace that has transfigured their outlook and transformed their weakness into strength. They have had no visions vouchsafed them that lifted them up above the common lot; as Paul was caught up in spirit to the third heaven and saw sights such as braced his soul to fresh endurance. They are ordinary folk, with such gifts as ordinary people have; but they have been forced to pay acute attention to every means the Christian has

for holding firm under distress of hostile circumstance. They have grown wiser than most of us because they have been compelled to learn the sources of their strength or else give up the fight. And it is good for us to give careful scrutiny to the ways and means of difficult campaigning; for we ourselves may soon be called upon to play the man in a way we have neither expectation nor desire of doing at the present time.

We have already considered the great assurance that underlies every other ground of comfort when one is brought face to face with trouble — that all things work together for good to those who love God. Without this anchor of the soul, one might easily drift before the storm and go to pieces on the rocks, for all his brave anticipations and wise philosophy. The abiding conviction that God's love is over all comes before all else in the armory of our defence.

But there is another noble persuasion that strengthens many to heroic patience. It may be seen at its best in the brief life of Adèle Kamm of Geneva, — that high-spirited girl whose gallant fight against crushing odds has recently been made known to the public.[1] She has borne witness that her joyous acceptance of years of shattering pain was made possible only by the assurance

[1] A Huguenot Saint of the Twentieth Century, by Paul Seippel.

that her suffering was in a sense for the good of others — that it was actually redemptive in its effect on other lives; that, in the language of Paul, she filled up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ. She was only a girl, untrained in exact or philosophic expression, and she has put her thought perhaps more strongly than is fully warranted. But it is far from being a new thought, and in her case the multitude of lives she cheered and helped to overcome, even in thick darkness, bears witness to its essential truth. Her triumphant victory over such affliction as most men would count more terrible than death lifted from many shoulders a burden of doubt and fear that made men unable to look up to God. Her quiet, glad suffering brought them deliverance. She could not work or preach; but she could suffer so gallantly, so joyously, that she worked effectively with her Lord to set at liberty those that were bruised.

Her experience, though of unusual and heroic form, is the experience in a humble way of many undistinguished souls, who are helped to bear their burden for the sake of others. It is easier for them to hold still under trial and meet the days uncomplaining because their courage and patience are so obvious an encouragement to others along the way. They may not be of much use

otherwise, but their very faithfulness under strain serves a real even if modest purpose in the lives of some about them. Were they to whimper, others would be afraid. If they can be of good cheer, others will bear themselves more faithfully in the thick of the fight. Phillips Brooks put this with his wonted clearness when he said, "I am sure that you or I could indeed be strengthened to meet some great experience of pain if we really believed that by our suffering we were to be made luminous with help to other men. They are to get from us painlessly what we have got most painfully from God. There is the power of the bravest martyrdom and the hardest work that the world has ever seen." And the same thought is expressed from another angle by Alexis Stein, "I am only sure of this: the fight that each man fights behind his chamber door for courage and for patience and for faith, he fights not for himself alone, he fights for all mankind; he fights as one who is a helper of his kind, as a blood brother of that One who upon the cross become the burden-bearer of the human race."

To be sure, this is a sublime motive and one for great souls. But it is characteristic of Christianity to bring the sublimest motives to the humblest tasks and humblest people. And there is no one of us who may not proudly

and resolutely endeavor to hold back the tide of personal grief or cowardice for the sake of those at his side. To win our private battle is to be a good comrade to others in the fight. And this is one of the ways and means of victory, that we should deny ourselves the indulgence of giving way under ill-fortune, in order that we may stand humbly with our Lord as helpers of men. It is a small contribution to make, as compared with the large services of those active in the fight; but even the widow's mite was a fragrant offering, and just to be patient under disappointment may also be an honorable sacrifice.

The longer he lives, the more is any thoughtful observer compelled to notice how largely the effect of trouble upon one is determined in extent by one's mental attitude toward it. It is not the trouble or the burden that lays low the spirit, but one's personal reaction upon it. The spirit in which we receive it, and the point of view from which we regard it, make all the difference between its being supportable or the reverse.

There is a deep philosophy in that charming incident of Dr. Guthrie's meeting with the little girl who was tottering under the weight of a big child whom she was carrying. "Is he not too great a burden for you?"

Dr. Guthrie asked. "Oh, no!" she said, "He's no a burden, he's ma wee brither." It would have been a staggering weariness to some, but the touch of love made it something not only to be expected but bringing reward. As a wise specialist in nervous diseases has said, "If there is something you have got to do, don't allow yourself to regard it as a burden." Carry it as lightly as may be, knowing that love comes with it, and that the necessary strength for meeting it will of a certainty be supplied. If the sorrow that suddenly overtakes one is to be received with resentful astonishment, the pain of it will be bitter indeed. But if one is a disciple of Jesus, and meets the blow as trustfully as Jesus met the reverses that came to him, the corrosive bitterness is somehow dissolved away, and one's spirit rises calmly to the demand upon its constancy.

Very likely we may be unable to change the outward circumstances of our life, but our inward reaction upon those circumstances is susceptible of the widest alteration. And so life's clearest teaching, for those who have to bear hardness, is that in every way within their power they should surround their stubborn lot with such thoughts and associations as yield strength and hope. The New Testament has not much to say of the

details of this mental warfare against enfeebling and depressing ideas, that so grievously add to the weight of any of life's burdens, but it puts before us the general outlook of faith and good cheer as the birthright of every believer in Jesus, and men are to use their aggregate experience and wisdom in applying this broad heritage of faith to the individual problems of need. The psychology of faith, in its application to the troubles men have to meet, is full of helpfulness. One who must cope with pain must be wise in the art of meeting it, as Jesus did, with every aid that grace and nature may make possible.

Above all else is the demand for a relentless warfare upon fear. Few people in their early years have any conception of its dread influence in spoiling human life. But as our acquaintance with life grows, and we see how bitter and evil is the bondage to anxiety into which many fall, and how cruelly fear accentuates every sorrow that men encounter, we are almost inclined to regard it as a chief enemy of human happiness. In all seriousness it is more cruel than death, for it anticipates death a hundred times, and cowers before every distress that might possibly precede the end.

There is a direct reason for resisting fear on physiological and hygienic grounds. Our

very bodies are made to respond to faith and hope with the maximum of healthful functioning, and to suffer serious inhibitions under the depressing influence of their opposite. As Dr. Sadler has said, "By nature the human mind and body are so constructed that the mental attitude of faith and optimism is absolutely essential to the normal and ideal working of every mental power and physical function." It is reassuring to think that even our bodies show that they are made for the optimism of joy. They are fitted to respond normally to hope and confidence. Indeed, could it be otherwise with the children whom God made in his own image? And yet we, out of sheer weakness and contrariness of will, fall under strong temptation to load ourselves uselessly with anxiety, and to double our cares by anticipating and exaggerating every misfortune that might conceivably befall us. Men do not even wait for misfortune to arrive in order to be miserable, but are miserable in advance, in fear of troubles that never appear; and slight illnesses or reverses are made tormenting not by present pain but by the empty imagination of worse pains to come.

In the heyday of robust health and irrepressible good spirits, we can afford to laugh at so preposterous a method of poi-

soning life. But as cares multiply, and the steady pressure of years begin to tell on heart and nerves and all the vital organs, so that one can no longer count on involuntary and automatic response to cheerful suggestion, the involuntary optimism of youth must be replaced by a deliberate and determined principle of hopeful living. One can easily drift into dejection and depression, in the years when disappointments begin to thicken; but there is no such thing as drifting into a calm and overcoming hopefulness. The triumph of faith in the face of pain is only won by a rigid refusal to live in the future or to grapple with more than the present demand for strength and self-possession. Is the present endurable? "Oh, yes," men say, "the present is endurable enough, but tomorrow—!" And then, because of tomorrow's menace, they go on to burden their souls today with all sorts of ills that are likely never to come, or which, if they do come, somehow bring with them the needful strength for the emergency.

How well do we of middle age understand this ever-recurring tragedy. We have every reason to resist it with all our power; but chiefly because it is treason to our Father's love.

> "Lie still, be strong, today.
> But Lord, tomorrow,

What of tomorrow, Lord?
Shall there be rest from toil, be truce from sorrow,

"Be living green upon the sward,
Now but a barren grave to me,
Be joy for sorrow?
Did I not die for thee?
Do I not live for thee?
Leave Me tomorrow." — *Christina Rossetti.*

If we are honestly to believe in Jesus, if we are to keep his commandments, we shall leave tomorrow to him. This does not demand sainthood, or resolution born out of high spiritual attainment, but only for honesty of discipleship. No one could genuinely claim to be a follower of Jesus and yet ignore his commands against impurity or malice. Yet his command against anxiety is as clear-cut and emphatic as his condemnation of hypocrisy. "Be not anxious for the morrow!" was the conclusion of an urgent warning against the laying waste of life by fear. Our Lord was in earnest in the matter, and spoke with great plainness, as of an unmitigated curse in human experience. He was not pointing out a sort of higher life for the inner circle of devout spirits, but was enjoining on all his disciples obedience to one of the rudimentary principles of victorious living.

The disciple of Jesus faces therefore a clear-cut issue in this matter of entertaining

fear. Shall he obey or disobey? Many are disposed to evade the issue by pleading a natural weakness of temperament, or an inability to give up worrying. But this we may not do, any more than we may plead a natural disposition to cheat our neighbor, as an excuse for dishonesty. Yet in very truth we are hard pressed to know how to obey. No doubt it is more difficult for some than for others. Some are naturally brave, some are naturally timid; some have no imagination, others have to fight an imagination both vivid and restless. For those of us who find it hardest to leave the future alone, what hope is there of being able to obey?

Above all else is the resource of prayer! "Ask and ye shall receive." We know that in such a case as this — the keeping of one of our Lord's commandments — there can be no doubt of our Father's good will to hear and answer. So we shall ask of him believing, and shall obey by the power that he will grant. Our whole religion stands or falls by this test. And it will not fall! By faith we may venture out upon his promise to keep us without fear. Not that the habit of quiet trust will become all-prevailing with us at once. We shall need a sleepless watchfulness, and new emergencies will probably need to be fought out anew. But as our

day so shall our strength be. Grace will come as needed. "When I said, my foot slippeth; thy lovingkindness, O Lord, held me up." (Ps. 94 : 18.)

And as God has forbidden us this vice of fear, he will assuredly make it possible for us to overcome if we lean on him. Not for a year at a time — not today even for tomorrow's needs. But moment by moment, as the demand is. As the proverb of the Caucasian mountaineers puts it, "Heroism is endurance for one moment more." It is the one moment more that, in reliance upon a power that cannot fail, we humbly trust to bring us through to the end.

No doubt the heavenly grace comes to us in homely ways, for such is its nature. And it is by simply formed habits that we go on from the negative denial of fear to the positive assertion of hope and courage. If we are to meet pain in the spirit that renders it least painful, it will be by giving large place in our thought to the countervailing assurances of our Father's love and help, and of ultimate deliverance. We owe a large debt to certain modern schools of thought much spoken against, for their earnest insistence upon the present and actually operative power of divine love in human life, even when circumstances seem outwardly most hostile. The Christian church has always

theoretically believed in it, but the Christian life has too largely been left without any adequate conception of its reality and comfort. A future time and place of consolation has been strongly affirmed; but the present uplifting consequence to human life of the fact that we live and move and have our being in One who is almighty love and goodness, has been miserably lost sight of or misunderstood.

For generations the reformed churches seemed to think they honored God by deepening the gloom of the present vale of tears in contrast with the joy of heaven; and language was pressed hard to describe the darkness of our earthly pilgrimage. Resignation was the virtue becoming to our present lot, and the deeper the gloom the more meritorious the resignation. That there is sadness enough in the world, every one will admit. But to accept and affirm it as the element and atmosphere of the Christian life is the essential denial of the teaching of Jesus Christ, who left his joy to men and bade them triumph in him. If we believe in Jesus, we can scarcely affirm or assert too stubbornly the presence and power of purposeful love as the deepest and most present force of all the forces that affect our life this very day. It is a reservoir of strength and comfort for those who are in need. We

may draw upon it for our necessities. Our sufficiency, we say again, is from God. And it is not a miserable or starveling sufficiency, but grateful and generous to the soul.

To be sure, this is bold doctrine. It demands a visible and present evidence of God's power in human life. We are venturing, some would think, on pretty thin ice. If it holds, well and good; but if it does not hold, we risk for a minor good the imperilment of all the great doctrines of grace. That is true. If it does not hold good, everything goes. If this present help of God in brightening life, on which Jesus laid such stress, fails to commend itself as a reality, anything else that Jesus said must fail to convince — it is of little consequence. But to him who ventures by faith to trust himself to Jesus' assurance, there will be no failure or unreality. As some tempted soul once cried out, "O my God, in thee have I trusted, let me not be put to shame. . . . Yea, none that wait for thee shall be put to shame." (Ps. 25 : 2, 3.) The only danger is that we shall be afraid to venture — that we shall neither trust in the Lord not wait for him.

But this is the way to victory — in season and out of season to deepen our reliance on the promises of God, for the most practical purposes of daily living. It was in this intensely practical way that Paul lived.

His prayers for the young converts were undoubtedly the reflection of his petitions for himself. And there is no petition that is more amazing in its boldness, yet more practical in its purpose, than his request, e.g., that those tempted Colossians might be "strengthened with all power, according to the might of his glory, unto all patience and longsuffering with joy." By day and night, in weakness and perplexity, that marvellous expectation of power for self-possessed endurance will be found on trial to justify itself in human experience.

No doubt there is an unintelligent and unreasonable way of using what are called the "Bible promises." Texts wrenched from their forgotten context are made to do duty in ways that are all too plainly inadmissible. Yet, on the other hand, our lack of intelligence is far more likely to be shown by our failure to utilize the great assurances of help and comfort that are legitimately for us. It does not greatly matter to whom the assurance originally came; it may be as much for us as though it were freshly spoken in our ears. The principles of divine action do not change, nor the methods of God's compassion; and if we are in the spiritual position of that one who long ago received the divine encouragement, the assurance is as much for us as though not a day had intervened.

The promises of God to tempted souls are of an unchanging validity; and the great assertions of faith in this unchanging God are as apt upon our lips as upon those of any saint or prophet of the past.

If one has to keep watch in the night through hours of restlessness or pain, it is a most gracious comfort to let one's mind range through the centuries of Hebrew history and single out the assurances of faith that came to earnest seekers after God, like rain upon the mown grass. It is of an inexpressible encouragement to remember how for thousands of years strong men have been passing through just such hours of anxious weakness, and, having reached out in the dark for a divine reinforcement, have found answer to their hopes. Our case is not peculiar. We are not the first ones to be timidly fighting against odds that we find too hard for us. There is no experience more human than to cry out of the depths to God, and it has been equally human to find the relief of a Father's response. And these experiences have left their witness in manifold words of confidence or promise all through that marvellous Old Testament, and in a lesser degree, and at rare intervals, in other sacred books of the East.

The book of the Psalms is a mosaic of human documents, telling of the distresses

and the deliverances of men who put their trust in God; and in it there are hundreds of verses that fit into our fears and hopes as the sunlight fits into the hollows of the hills. The prophets, too, lived in days of uncertainty and fear, and were driven to take refuge in the Almighty. Their prophetic insight into his response is found in such utterances of reassurance as have been ever since a pillow for weary heads to rest upon. As in the typical words, " When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." (Is. 43 : 2.) Some will object that these promises are very old, and were made for a specific time and purpose long since forgotten of men. It is enough to answer that he who believes in Jesus will find in them assurances as new as last night's emergency, and specifically addressed to the very son or daughter of the Most High who calls on Him for help. There is a permanent validity about these pledges of the loving-kindness of God to those who cast themselves on him, on which we may venture a complete reliance without fear.

It is the best that is true, for those who leave themselves trustfully in God's hands. In our early years we are apt to be too sophisticated and too cautious to accept God's greater mercies without argument. It is a

sign of maturing and not of weakening judgment if we have grown more childlike and simple in our reliance upon his fatherly goodness in our times of need. It was the massive intellect of Jonathan Edwards that lay behind his saying that he " very often thought of taking hold of Christ as a little child, to be led by him through the wilderness of this world." And Clay Trumbull has given the ripe experience of a strong man in the story of his own nightly prayer:

> " I remember, many years ago, a little boy on a trundle bed, having just retired for the night. Before going to sleep, he turned in the direction of the large bed on which his father lay, and said, ' Father, are you there? ' and the answer came back, ' Yes, my son.' I remember that that boy turned over and went to sleep without a thought of harm. Tonight that little boy is an old man of seventy, and every night before going to sleep he looks up into the face of his heavenly Father, and says, ' Father, are You there? ' and the answer comes back, ' Yes, my son.' And then he asks in childish faith, ' Will You take care of me tonight? ' and the answer comes back, clear and strong, ' Yes, my son.' Whom need we fear, if God our Father be with us? "

He who believes in Jesus may, as a little child, rest upon the mighty presence of his Father and lie down in peace.

After all, perhaps the really keen distresses of life are not the ones hardest to bear, simply because the very stress of our need drives us at such times to lean on God and to call

up to our help the great reserves. We may say with Mark Rutherford, "The help that is most wanted is not remedies against great sorrows. The chief obstacle to the enjoyment of life is its dullness and the weariness which invades us when there is nothing to be seen or done of any particular value." This is the typical temptation of middle age. The glowing hopes and ambitions that have so long buoyed us up and carried us on have either been satisfied or have grown pale and ineffectual with years of non-realization. And as the early enthusiasm dies out, there is danger that we allow the late afternoon to set in dull and gray, as though the day could now hold nothing new and nothing great; nothing to thrill the spirit; little indeed but the gradual depletion of our powers. Especially is this true of those lonely souls, bereaved by the Great War, who say heavily to themselves that life never again can be what it has been.

Life has few disappointments more benumbing than such despondency; and this, at least, is not of our Father's sending. Surely it is one of the most insidious and paralyzing temptations that life holds, and many men and women are called upon to fight against it as against an arch-enemy of their souls. To come to a new year apathetic and indifferent, as though the interest of

life were over, without any song in the heart because of hopes yet to blossom, is to be numbered among the defeated. But against this we must set ourselves with stern resolve. Yet not only with stern resolve, as though we were compelling ourselves grimly to be cheerful when there is no cheer, but with fresh-springing anticipation of new mornings of gladness yet to dawn.

The imperishable element of wonder and surprise in the Christian life is what we must guard as we guard that life itself. We have tasted that the Lord is gracious — who would say that we have more than tasted? That the best is yet to be, is the confident affirmation of the disciple of Jesus, so long as the resources of God are not exhausted. It would be a tragedy indeed if the first stumbling years of discipleship, so limited in understanding and in capacity to receive, were to be the best years, reaching heights never afterward attained; as though we had once experienced at the full the love of God, and nothing higher thereafter remained to be enjoyed.

What a miserable travesty this is of the actual reality! Does any one suppose that the gray world of closed possibilities, on which we sometimes look out with dull, unlit eyes, is the real world — the true world of the glorious God of life and joy? If our gaze is

heavy and lustreless, it neither sees nor tells the truth. Rather was the truth hinted at in those rare moments of ecstasy in years gone by, before shades of the prison-house began to close around us, when at some height of clairvoyant emotion we looked out upon a world transfigured with a joy we could neither measure nor understand. It is not reality that is grasped by wearied senses, jaded and dulled with years of care and labor. The real outlook is full of the glory of the majesty of him who made us to love beauty and to thirst for life.

And what waits for us when we are past middle age is all the ocean fullness of God's yet unexplored goodness. We are at its margin still — we have put out but a little way from shore. The wonder of his plans of grace, the surprise of fresh awakenings to his love and power, are waiting for us yet, if we are waiting for the Lord. We have not quaffed already the cup of life so that only the dregs remain. If the Lord is the portion of our cup we have yet to drink of life at the full. We are not among the long shadows of the afternoon. We have but to wait a little, and for us, lo,

"Morning comes singing o'er the sea!"

CHAPTER XIV

The Hope of Everlasting Life

WE who have reached middle age can no longer conceal from ourselves that we have reached and passed the high tide of life's joys. The ebb has begun, and there will be no turning now until the end. Already we have begun to lose the things that gave life its early color and delight. We are no longer so anxious for fresh joys as we are to keep those we have. But we cannot keep them. Life has so long meant to us a steady *crescendo* of powers and possessions that we are a little startled to reflect that in the very nature of the case it is likely to mean for many of us an equally steady *diminuendo* from now on. The future begins to look at times a little gray. This would not so much matter if our desires were fading in equal proportion; but the hunger for life is as strong in us as it ever was, or stronger. Is there anything to satisfy it, or must we steel ourselves to a gradual surrender of all we have and are?

What is the farthest reach of human life? Are we in sight of it already? What are its utmost powers of development? Have we seen all of growth that we shall

ever see? The answer means either tragedy or inspiration for our daily life. Science cannot tell us. It can follow our body's career up to the last instant, but it has no instruments or powers of calculation so delicate as to follow our spirit one step beyond. Philosophy can only speculate, without assurance. And when the earth is actually slipping from beneath one's feet, speculation affords poor standing-ground.

Only in Jesus Christ is there chance of an answer. Only by his spirit can we measure our spirit's capacity for life. The history of the human soul is written in him. And, as we know, he who believes in Jesus will rest in the quiet assurance of a life beyond the grave — not so much because of what Jesus taught, nor even because of the historical weight of evidence for his resurrection, but because of the whole weight and significance of his personality. We shall be interested in every concurrent and corroborative judgment from thoughtful men, from Socrates and Plato down to our own day. Always wistfully eager for more light, we shall give attention to what every latest philosopher has to say upon the subject, however depressing his lack of spiritual insight may be. But we shall neither rest on their support, nor be discouraged by their indecision.

As our solicitude about a future life grows keener, as the hope of it becomes gradually the central hope of all that is left us, we become even more critical of the ground of our faith. As Bossuet said, "The greatest aberration of the mind consists in believing a thing because it is desirable." We want no such aberration, even though it should be full of comfort. We want reasonable assurance. We cannot be satisfied with analogies or probabilities. We do not ask for proof of what may not be proved, but we do ask for that intimate and satisfying ground of conviction that shall be unshakable. And this we find in Jesus Christ. If we believe in him, we cannot doubt that the day of the soul is not concluded here under the sun.

This is not because of the abundance of his teaching upon the subject. It is always a fresh surprise to run over the three Synoptists and see how Jesus was content to leave the subject of the future life almost completely in the shadow. If his teachings in the matter had been in any wise proportionate to the curiosity of his church, or if he had deemed its importance for human life to be anything like what his followers have supposed, the New Testament record would certainly have been very different from what it is. But apart from apocalyptic allusions

to the Judgment Day, a single parable that makes use of the conventional Jewish imagery of Abraham's bosom, and the brief argument with the Sadducees regarding the resurrection, we are left almost without suggestion as to the nature of the spirit's existence after death.

This is not at all as we would have it. It is not even what we should expect to be the case. But it is the unmistakable and unyielding fact. The discourses of Jesus had to do with the homely and prosaic duties of men toward men, here and now on earth, with the great good fight of the Kingdom of God here amidst the alien conditions that we know so well, and with the life of faith and love toward God that is the fulfilling of the law. His whole soul went out toward the men and women who were fighting the same battle he was fighting, and his whole teaching seems to have been absorbed with the ways and means of bringing this fight to a successful issue. And he did not count among these ways and means a foreknowledge of the conditions of spirit life in another world.

Probably they transcended human language, as well as human understanding. But it would seem they were not much in his mind. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the reason

that he did not speak of them was because he was more concerned with other things. As Jesus only spoke those words that were given him to speak, it more and more seems probable to this generation that the detailed knowledge of a world to come — as of the time of the last day — was not among the things revealed to him. "What is that to thee? Follow thou me," would have been his reply to those whose curiosity pressed him for an answer. He centered men's thoughts upon the infinite importance of the present hour — its duties, its rewards, its heavenly and eternal significance. He left the great hope shining clear, to light up every footstep of the way. None should ever pluck them out of their Father's hand. But of material for speculation or day-dreaming as to another existence he left them next to nothing.

In this we cannot but think that our own generation is nearer to his will than some of those that have gone before. Of course many in our day, as in all days, are like the rich fool of whom Jesus spoke, who was so engrossed with making a fortune that he utterly forgot to make a life. He was of the earth earthy. He needed to have the searchlight of his eternal destiny turned upon his daily living. Not one of us but needs the stimulus of an eternal hope, in all our think-

ing and doing. But the average Christian of today is singularly unlike the so-called "heavenly-minded man" of a few generations past. That saintly spirit, William Law, was typical of the best Christian thought of the time, when he gave explicit direction, in his *Serious Call*, for a fixed daily time of meditation upon death and its issues. To "set one's affections upon things above" meant for him and his contemporaries that they should definitely detach their gaze from earthly or social considerations, and fasten it upon their personal lot in a yet unrevealed world to come. In proportion as they were able to do this they were heavenly-minded and ripening for eternity.

Such a thought has somehow faded out of the religious experience of today, even with those whom age or infirmity might be supposed largely to have shut up to thoughts like these. It has been the good fortune of the writer to talk with many saintly men and women who were very near the other side, whose remaining interests in this world would seem almost too slight to hold their thoughts to earth. But with rare exceptions their thoughts were frankly engaged, not with heaven or its possibly near dawn upon their spirits, but with the same Kingdom of God on earth with whose welfare much of their life had been bound up. The last

word of more than one soul in distress of deep waters has been,

> I love thy kingdom, Lord,
> The house of thine abode;
> The church our dear Redeemer bought
> With his own precious blood.

And, after all, is not this as our Lord would have it? This is a fighting world and we are called to a fighting career. The rest of heaven does not gradually replace the strain of the fight. Only as we lay down the worn body do we lay off the old armor of the finished campaign. And we need not distress ourselves if we are not as "other-worldly" as we once supposed we would be when life was two-thirds done. Our Lord was very busy about his Father's business almost up to his last day of living. His preparedness did not come from weeks of meditation about the hereafter, but from a single devotion to each day's call during that last crowded springtime. In this, as in all else, he was perfectly natural. If we, as his followers, live a life chiefly guided by his teachings, without straining or artificiality, it is likely to be shaped more and more by the ambition, "Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven"; and its other-worldliness will appear in its active love rather than in its holy imagination of unrevealed glories.

All this, however, is far from meaning either that interest in a possible immortality is dying out, or that a firm assurance of it is of little consequence to human life. The opposite is true. Never was the problem so vital a one as it is today, simply because life itself is more intense, more vital, more full of value, than it has ever been before; and as our valuation of life rises, so does our reluctance to see it end, half-satisfied, in death. To a stolid Chinese peasant, knowing few joys above the level of animal comfort, whose life has been grudging and difficult from birth to death, it may be of little consequence whether a wider future awaits him. But just in proportion as life becomes rich and wonderful and crowded with possibilities of high attainment barely opening upon us in this brief hand's breadth of years, do we shrink from laying it down — like a thirsty man who has just raised the cup of water to his lips. No doubt there are some discouraged souls who would gladly put out the lamp of life and sink into an eternal sleep. But there are not many so crushed of spirit, even among the miserable; and in this good world of God there should be none at all. Assuredly there are none among those who have caught the vision that Jesus had, of the Kingdom of God and its eternal fellowship of love between God and men.

To have seen life as Jesus saw it, majestic with issues of transcendent value, is to cling to it with a hope that refuses to be denied. And never has life been so majestically full of worth and promise as it is today.

Our generation hungers for immortality not only because life is more wonderful than it has been, but because, as human life becomes increasingly intense and complicated, we need the reaction of a faith in immortality upon every day of living. In dull and sluggish times, when every man at evening sat in quiet at his own tent door, it may well have been easier than now to trust placidly in the righteousness of Jehovah, as the God of all the earth. But in the feverish intellectual restlessness and social discontent of our day, always harassed by the insoluble problems of wrong and pain and inequality, always beset with the temptation to cynicism or frivolity or despair, we need, as almost never before, the steadying assurance of an infinite value and reach to human life, in which the resources of eternal love and righteousness shall have a chance to work out to completion what this brief chaotic strife of right with wrong can never bring to pass. Eternity was the scale on which Jesus worked out his earthly plan; and nothing but a like confidence in eternity gives one room to think after him his thoughts.

But whether or not we need the stimulus and comfort of such a hope, it is obvious that he who believes in Jesus will find this sublime anticipation blossoming in his heart. It is impossible to trust in him and in the worth of his spiritual insight, and yet suppose for a moment that he lived in a world of spiritual unrealities, and gave his life at last for an illusion. He was as sure that the grave was not the end of life for men, as he was that he himself was returning to the Father. He was never haunted by the fear that either Pharisee or Roman could put an end to his fellowship with the Father, by the simple expedient of crushing the life out of his body. The infinite values of the whole moral universe of his filial communion with God were not at the mercy of a bare bodkin. And with an equal clearness of vision he saw that his brethren also belonged to a household that is not of this earth only. So that for us who believe in Jesus, his convictions are manifestly decisive.

CHAPTER XV

The Unending Fellowship

WE cannot rest content, however, with the mere assertion of the decisiveness of Jesus' faith in immortality. What is it specifically in his personality and teaching that gives ground for this assurance, in the face of so many fears and questionings by wise men in our day?

It is well to give a moment's consideration to these fears, in passing. We must not allow ourselves to be too seriously concerned by them, as though they somehow furnished a body of contrary evidence. We who have tried to keep an open mind through thirty years of dogmatic intolerance, both theological and scientific, do well to remember that we may approach this question knowing that it is a clear field for spiritual evidence, in which science has no discouraging word to offer. We need have no apprehension of "doing violence to reason," as though the biological researches of our time had somehow cast reasonable doubt upon humanity's last and greatest hope.

There seems to be in many minds a suspicion that a firm trust in immortality has in some way become out of date, as though

Haeckel and a few other dogmatists of like temper had proved it to be unworthy of a scientific mind. Professor Palmer of Harvard has well said, "Formerly most of the superstitions of the day sprang from religion. In our time they are more apt to come from cheap science, and often succeed in terrorizing the religious mind." It is only cheap or presumptuous science that could go so far beyond its data of fact as to affirm that the universe has no place for spiritual existences apart from a physical organism, and that the life of the soul must needs end with the life of the body. We can afford to dismiss such skeptical intolerance with the stern rebuke of so thoroughgoing an evolutionist as Professor Fiske, that it "affords perhaps the most colossal instance of baseless assumption that is known to the history of philosophy."

The most decisive and satisfying utterances of Jesus center about the personal relationship to himself of the disciples. The intimacy of fellowship and love that had begun between them was unlike all other human friendships, so far as we know them. It was not for a possible two years, within the familiar confines of Galilee and Judea, but was untrammeled by time or place. It would outwear the decay of the body, and would go on undisturbed under new and

strange conditions of which they could form no conception. Their fortunes were bound up with him for more than a few years of painful contest against overwhelming odds. They were to see and share his glory as well as his humiliation.

They had little idea of what this meant; for their thoughts scarcely lifted above a purely Jewish setting. But we can see how Jesus was facing for them a shoreless future. And this future was to be theirs because they were his friends. "Because I live ye shall live also." They were to "inherit eternal life" because they had chosen to suffer hardness with him here; as, indeed, all those who should lose their life for his sake should find it. "Where I am," he said, "there shall also my servant be." And in that verse which has sunk so deep into the hearts of millions facing the deep waters, either for themselves or those they loved, he said, "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself, that where I am there ye may be also."

We have no other satisfying title to immortality than this, which naturally carries little satisfaction to one who only believes in Jesus with large reservations. We have become so used to the hopefulness of Christendom in the face of death, that we need

to be even sharply reminded how little basis such optimism would have if the life and words of Jesus were to be eliminated from human knowledge. We should still, so far as we can see, be in that chill gloom of pagan fear which is reflected in the epitaphs on Greek and Roman tombs, in contrast with the strange triumphant hopefulness of the early Christian inscription in the Catacombs. At best, individuals among us would be standing where Socrates stood, clinging, in spite of popular derision, to the hope that the gods had use for us even when earthly days were done. But there was little warmth or color in such a faith, and at best it rested on the marvelous spiritual insight of the man himself, which he was pathetically unable to communicate to others. The later Jewish faith in a resurrection to judgment had small power to commend itself to men of other races, as, indeed, it would have appeared to have little save the fact of a stubborn national hope to rest upon.

It is the influence of Jesus, often unrecognized, that has so largely tempered our modern attitude to the hereafter, and has so profoundly strengthened the moral and psychological arguments for a future life. And it is well for us to bring this fact forward into consciousness, both that we may be renewedly grateful to him for this hope of

all hopes, and that we may better realize how the hope, after all, is grounded in a genuine fellowship with him. It is not to be cheaply had. A Christian heredity, or baptism into a state church, or a profession of faith, does not necessarily make it ours; but only, in the ultimate testing, an honest heart-loyalty to him. For it is unmistakably on this that he rests his anticipations of eternal life for his disciples. The continuance of personal existence and moral responsibility is assumed by him for all men; but for the life which is life indeed, men are to share it only as they are united with him as branches with the vine.

Perhaps it is not so much on any specific words of Jesus that our faith rests, as on the whole effect and witness of his personality in its bearing on this problem. The personality of Jesus was developed in time and under our familiar human conditions; but through and through it was related to eternity. If there was no unseen yet abiding world of the spirit, in which he was a sharer even then, it was a pitiful mockery, a dismal enigma. If he was not a citizen of two worlds, in very deed and truth, he was merely a demented wanderer in the world which now is. Judged in the light of eternity, his life was intelligible, convincing, victorious; but if a Roman legionary

was able to bring that perfect love and trust and hope to utter defeat and annihilation, then it was an incongruous and jarring discord in the moral world. It was harmonious only with eternity; each day of it vibrated with the impulse of an endless life. It took such hold on God that we simply cannot conceive that hold being summarily brought to nought by death.

And his followers' fortunes he bound up in the same bundle of life with himself. "As I am, so are ye in the world." Together they were citizens of an everlasting Kingdom, the Kingdom of the Father. The pantheistic hope of being merged into the world-spirit at death, reabsorbed into the great ocean of being, would have been utterly without significance to him. He saw how clearly the supreme values of life were bound up with personal relations, and it was the power of this personal relationship that, both for him and the disciples, was to ransom them from the power of the grave. Love was the tie that was to hold him and them indissolubly to him who had made them for himself. And it was because he lived in love that he lived in the joyous assurance of eternity.

As to the nature of the life to come and the manner of our entrance into it, it is sometimes hard for us to be faithful to our

own ignorance. We may have started out as children with very clear and satisfying ideas of heaven, based upon the beautiful imagery of the Revelation, in its description of the city with streets of gold and gates of single pearls. But from this childish simplicity of faith, so impossible for the mature mind, we are borne away, whether we will or no, into something that perhaps is not so near the truth as the naïve literalness of childhood.

Yet our experience could not be otherwise. Most thoughtful men come in time to recognize that there is no clearly defined biblical teaching on this subject, and that all efforts to compel from the Bible an explicit statement of the manner of our transition to the spiritual world, or the sequence and nature of the last things, are — and were divinely meant to be — vain and unconvincing. There are indeed explicit statements to be found, even in the New Testament; but the more these are pressed into matter-of-fact descriptions of literal occurrences, the more do we recognize how utterly the reality transcends the limitations of such word pictures.

As has often been pointed out, the Bible has three distinct strata of belief and teaching as to the future life. The first, which comprehends most of the Old Testament,

frankly denies it. The holy men of old, even among the chosen people, for the most part lived and died without this faith. As the Psalmist said, "In death there is no remembrance of Thee; in Sheol who shall give Thee thanks?" (Ps. 6 : 5.) The dead had lost their hold on God, as they had lost their place on the pleasant earth. They could no longer know or praise his goodness. As another Psalmist wrote, "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? Shall they that are deceased arise and praise thee? Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Or thy faithfulness in Destruction? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness?" (Ps. 88 : 10-12.) Even Hezekiah, in his bitter hunger for more days in the sunlight, cried out, "Sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee." (Isa. 38 : 18-19.) It was a desolate belief, and it cannot be wondered at that most people seem agreed to forget that it has any place in the Bible.

After the Exile, this was gradually replaced in Jewish thought by the less gloomy belief that the dead "slept in the dust of the earth," until the day when they should be

summoned forth to judgment. Thus Ezekiel represents Jehovah as saying to the dry bones of his vision, " I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves, O my people; and I will bring you into the land of Israel." (Ezek. 37 : 12.) This was the belief that had stiffened into dogma by our Lord's day, and was refused only by the sect of the Sadducees. Righteous and wicked alike, the dead were in their tombs, waiting the hour when they should be called to earth. It was the hereditary and rooted conviction of our Lord's disciples, and whatever allusions he may have made in their hearing to a resurrection had to be transmitted through the medium of their understanding, colored by these intense preconceptions. It is a view that is repeatedly suggested in the gospels, and even in the later writings of the New Testament.

There was a further unfolding of hope, however, that came with the teaching of Christ and with ripening Christian experience. This confidently counted upon an unbroken continuance of the personality and of its conscious fellowship with Jesus Christ, in spite of physical dissolution. The reawakening to conscious life was not put off to some far-distant day at the end of the age, but the new life dawned as the weary body was laid down. Thus Jesus said to

the penitent thief, "This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." He spoke also of God as the God of the living, who still maintained fellowship with those who had walked with him on earth. Jesus himself even held converse with the living spirits of Moses and Elijah. He thought of heaven not as a place swept bare of all human fellowship by the sleep of the grave, but as the scene of the richer and deeper communion which he promised to his disciples in those many mansions. He claimed that he was himself the resurrection and the life, so that he who lived and believed in him should never die. The influence of this teaching appears clearly in the later thought of Paul, to whom death meant the departing to be with Christ. To be absent from the body was to be at home with the Lord, which was very far better. "For we know," he said, "that if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

This is the faith which more and more comes to be that of the thoughtful Christian experience, as it breaks away from bondage to the letter, and rests upon the teaching of Jesus: that God has made us for himself in a fellowship of love that is a joy to him, and that cannot be interrupted by the incident of

physical death. He that hath the Son hath the life. And it is a life that can neither be drowned in the darkness of Sheol, as Hezekiah feared, nor held for ages sleeping in the tomb until the sound of an archangel's trumpet.

It is true we have not the light we would wish to have. Only at a few points does it seem to reach our need, and at none does it relieve our curiosity. Perhaps any consideration of the theme rouses more perplexities than it relieves, so utterly do these things lie outside our understanding. Questions rise to our lips to die away unanswered. What are we to do, e.g., with all that portentous apocalyptic imagery of the Last Day — "Day of wrath, that dreadful day, when the heavens shall pass away" — when at the trumpet blast, every soul of man shall be gathered for the Great Assize, to be judged out of the things written in a book? What of the coming with clouds, and the gathering of uncounted millions in the air, and the busy angels garnering the harvest, and all the cataclysmic overturnings of those days of doom?

Let him answer with assurance who thinks he knows where the pictorial element in those ancient prophetic imaginings leaves off, and where the underlying spiritual reality begins. Surely, nowhere would we walk

with more humility and reverence for the early faith than in the presence of these mysteries that so far outrun our power to think or see or understand. But we must not forget that our faithfulness to the Bible is not proportioned to the literalness with which we construe its letter, so much as to the sympathy and moral insight with which we interpret its spirit. Even in the lifetime of Paul the apostle, we can see his attitude changing toward the problems of the future life. And many generations of humble reverent seekers for the truth have come and gone since then, clarifying our vision of the laws of the spiritual life, in life and death. And so profoundly have we come to feel the silent inevitableness of God's rewards and punishments in character, the inseparable consequences of sin and holiness, of love and hate, that the ancient Jewish conception of a distant day of formal awards, with all its setting of a material universe convulsed with the terror of that crisis, seems to many to belong to the pictorial stage of education, in the childhood of moral development. The truth and the awe of it all are with us still, but clothed in different forms, that reach home to the understanding of the present day. And clear, outstanding, high above all veiling metaphors, is the hope of endless life for those who take refuge in

God. "He that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

With this hope we are content. Death is the gate of life. Our loved ones are not sleeping in the grave; rather do they stand "all rapture through and through," serving God in his presence. Amid the infinite activities of that spiritual world, passionately alive, as God is alive, to the needs of this stricken earth, we believe that our Father has other uses for them than to leave their spirits, trained and tempered to his holy uses, in silent sleep while the crowded millenniums of the struggle for the Kingdom wear heavily on for lack of helpers. Rather have they gone up to the help of the Lord against the mighty. Amid the boundless multitudes of those who have gone out into the other world untaught, untrained, undeveloped — like the hosts of little children on whom infinite labors of love must yet be spent — there is place enough for every redeemed life, chastened and made sweet and wise by earth's discipline, to find needy and joyous avenues of service, even in the heavenly city. It is thus that we interpret our Lord's parable of the good servant, found faithful in a few things and made ruler over many things. The reward of that servant, entering into the joy of his Lord, was to bend his shoulder to new and heavier burdens

— glorious burdens, that angels might wish to carry, in that new-found heavenly strength.

This is the well-grounded hope that is cheering the heart today of many a man and woman, laid helplessly aside from any share in the great work of the Kingdom here below, and waiting, through long useless years of pain and weariness, for another chance to feel the keen delight of uttermost activity in the forefront of need. Theirs is, with Stevenson, the "dingy battlefield of the bed and physic bottle." But they will hear the bugle call again! No fear! Because their Lord lives, they shall live also; and as his life is the very energy of love, so shall they presently find their place in that blessed ministry of service at his side.

This, then, is the outlook upon life that belongs to those who believe in Jesus — an outlook immensely wide and satisfying, full of dignity and promise. Our immediate present may be choked with care, and barred irrevocably from any free advance to new possessions. But our future is unbounded, and our capacity for life has hardly yet been drawn upon. Our horizon is as broad as the mercies of God, and when evening has really come, we shall know that the greater day of life is just about to dawn.

Here on the open desert where these words are written, the world in which we

live is wonderful for its spaciousness. The dawn breaks every morning on a far straight horizon, as of the ocean. The sun rolls up, a disc of molten gold, above the desert rim. All day it moves amid the great silent spaces of the sky, with neither smoke nor cloud to dim its grandeur. And when night falls, the constellations go wheeling through the heavens, in the same solemn splendor as once before the eyes of Job, until they set behind the mountain wall. The silence, the spaciousness, the endless wonder of this illimitable pageantry, bring rest and comfort to the soul. The very memory of the restlessness of great cities is faint and far away.

It is somewhat so that life lies open to him who believes in Jesus. It is majestic in its amplitude. To multitudes it is close and feverish and full of disappointment. Even its rosy promises are but illusion that quickly passes, leaving one embittered with the tantalization of its mocking beauty. But our hunger for life, to its very last thrill of eager longing, is a true promise of the satisfaction that shall be. He that wrought us for this very thing is God. Our Lord came that we might have life and have it abundantly. Even if we are past the meridian, we have hardly yet begun to taste how good the waters of life are. The best is yet to be. " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard,

neither have entered into the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared for them that love him."

And so, setting ourselves in quiet confidence to the task of each new day, we also say by faith, with that hard-pressed comrade in the good fight, "Thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

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